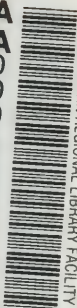


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J. Martin del. sc.

THE REEDING FIGURE

Her eyes staggered in her anxious eye
 And his reeding figure through the wood,
 Her full veins throbbed with terror's agony
 And the fierce image of that man of blood

— 17 —

THE ISLAND BRIDE

IN SIX CANTOS

BY

THE REV. HOBART CAUNTER, B.D.

SECOND EDITION.

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ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

I CANNOT suffer a second edition of this little Poem to go forth to the world, without expressing how fully alive I am to the very flattering testimonies which have been given in its favour by some of the leading periodicals of the day. In one, indeed, I was censured as an imitator of Campbell; but another traced a similarity to Beattie; while a third discovered that I reminded the reader of Parnell: these latter two, however, spoke in terms of high approbation of the book. The inference which may be fairly drawn from these opposite judgments is, that I have imitated none of those distinguished poets. I am not, in fact, conscious of imitation; though, it must be confessed, there is some similarity between my story and the "Gertrude of Wyoming;" but it is purely accidental.

It is difficult to express what I feel at the favourable reception which the Poem has met with. It

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was ushered into the world with no pretension; and I confess I was apprehensive that, amid the vast flux of literary novelties which is now constantly pouring from the press, my little volume would be absorbed, and escape the public attention. The demand for it, however, has been far beyond my expectation; and, thus encouraged, I have ventured upon a second edition.

As several persons who seem to have taken an interest in the story, have inquired whether the events related in it are true, I will here state the incident which originally suggested it. When I touched at the Isle of France, on my way from India, there was an old man, with silvery locks, residing on a small estate a few miles distant from the town of Port Louis, who was an object of universal sympathy, having become deranged in consequence of the loss of an only daughter. These simple facts have furnished the groundwork of "The Island Bride;" the rest of the characters, as well as all the incidents of the poem, are fictitious.

Somerset Street,
Oct. 25, 1830.

THE ISLAND BRIDE.

CANTO I.

When I consider life, 'tis all a cheat;
Yet, fooled by hope, men favour the deceit—
Trust on, and think to-morrow will repay.
To-morrow's falser than the former day—
Lies worse, and, whilst it says we shall be blest
With some new joys, cuts off what we possess.
Strange cozenage!—none would live past years again,
Yet all hope pleasure from what yet remain,
And from the dregs of life hope to receive
What its first sprightly running could not give.

Dryden.

CANTO THE FIRST.

A charm was on the leopard when he came
Within the circle of that mystic shade :
Submiss he crouched before the heavenly maid,
And offered to her touch his speckled side.

Curse of Kehama.

I.

BENEATH a distant hill whose giant form
Threatened the clouds, an humble cottage stood ;—
Small, low and lonely, it escaped the storm ;
Screened and protected by a neighbouring wood
Which spread its sombre foliage many a rood :
Above its chimney-top the craggy steep¹
Rose like a column, on whose brow the brood
Of carrion birds their daily revel keep,
And there in guiltless blood their horny talons steep.

II.

Here oft the storm terrific fury poured,²
Like a bayed tiger in his fierce despair.
Around its peak the deafening thunders roared,
And the gaunt wolf, half famished, sought his lair—
Scared by the din, to howl his terrors there.
Trees down the mighty precipices flung,
From their bleak sides the scanty verdure tear:—
The poles seemed rent on which the world is hung,
When round the blackening skies the voice of ruin rung.

III.

Here on the dizzy cliff the light gazelle
Browzed fearless by the dark and deep ravine ;
Beneath him rolled the clouds, and o'er the dell
Hovered the morning mists, as if to screen
The airy wanderer. Whilst with eye serene
And bounding step he sprung from steep to steep
Heedless of peril, what a glorious scene
Around him spread ! Who could behold, and keep
His big heart still the while?—how would it start and leap,

IV.

To view the heavens' magnificent array
Without a speck to bar the raptured sight;
To mark the rising of the orb of day
In all the splendour of unclouded light;
To see what, in his plenitude of might,
The Deity for this fallen world has done!
Oh! think not, mortal, that sin's withering blight
Has marred it yet—up the high mountain run,
And from the swelling flood behold the morning sun.

V.

See him above the slumbering waters rise
With one grand burst of glory, whilst the wave
Catches the lustre as he climbs the skies
To look on distant worlds; the blue concave
Grows bright before him, and he seems to pave
Its vast circumference with his own light.
The fading stars his presence dare not brave;
And when he glows from his meridian height,
All but a God he seems, in reason's very spite.³

VI.

The mountain gained, gaze o'er the vast expanse;
Behold it—how stupendous the display!—
See nature in her wild magnificence;
Then to that God the prostrate homage pay
Who lit, when all was dark, the torch of day,
And spangled o'er with stars the ethereal road.
If in this world it were man's doom to stay,
Nor pierced by sorrow's sting nor misery's goad,
How would his heart rejoice in such a blest abode!

VII.

The ocean compassed with its watery zone
MAURITIUS' rocky shore; above the sea
Hills, as by some long-past convulsion thrown
From the smooth plain, frowned sternly o'er the lea.⁴
Upon their brows the hardy ebony
Waved to the blast in deep and dusky files:
Beneath the thick funereal canopy
The Caffer brigand, resting from his toils,
In plotting daring schemes the daylight hours beguiles.

VIII.

Here 'neath the towering Alp securely rose
The dwelling of content ; before the door
A yew-tree grew, grave emblem of repose.
Though all within proclaimed its inmates poor,
Still nought of vulgar life was there ; their store,
Though rude, evinced them of fair lineage sprung.
A sire and daughter were its inmates ; sore
The sorrows which the old man's heart had wrung,
Though o'er him now content her sweetest chaplet hung.

IX.

The neat sequestered dwelling reared its head
Close at the mountain's base ; along the wall
Its yearly growth a vine luxuriant spread,
And duly gave its luscious load to all
For whom it thrived, and, though the boon was small,
With tributary store repaid their care.
Nigh to the garden foamed a waterfall,
Which lent its limpid current, cold and rare,
To cheer the thirsty soil to yield its frugal fare.

X.

Seldom the squalid harpies of disease
Came on destruction's mission ;⁵ nature here
In all her various changes seemed to please ;
And though sometimes her aspect was severe,
Still, when her terrors waked the shriek of fear,
There was an awful grandeur in their scowl.
What though the fierce tornado, year by year,
Sent forth his deathful agents here to howl,—
Ne'er teemed with fogs the air, dark, pestilent and foul.

XI.

Thus, health requited by her blessings rare
The inmates of this solitary cot.
They were not pampered ; their repast was spare :
Content enhanced their homeliness of lot,
And peace maintained her empire o'er the spot.
Clear was the sky above them—never there
The deadly vapour sailed ; with crimson blot
Fever ne'er flushed her cheek ; nor croaking care
Approached, with pointed fang, to prey upon despair.

XII.

The wide and varied prospect charmed the eye
With all that heaven's magnificence could yield :
Above, the cloudless azure of the sky,
Below, the simple vesture of the field.
The surging mountain, on whose summit reeled
Its hardy sons above the reach of sight ;—
The wood, whose trees their giant branches wield
To dare the crashing tempest in its might,
Impart to nature's child a stern but pure delight.

XIII.

For there are feelings for the vast and wild
In nature and her rude sublimities.
When, like huge Ossas upon Pelions piled,
Her alpine barriers seem to brave the skies,
Within us those sublime emotions rise
Which lift us to the stars, and, pure as they,
Raise the heart's rapture through the wondering eyes.
Thus when around the heavens fierce lightnings play,
With a stern pleasure still we trace their dazzling way.

XIV.

This was the clime of storms and of the sun.
In many a trench and rugged knoll was seen
How fiercely they destruction's work had done :
Still to the view, in fair and verdant sheen,
The prospect smiled, one mass of living green.
Before the cot a grassy vista sloped
Its smooth defile; there, spring's congenial queen,
The wild rose to the breeze her bosom oped—
There joy was fresh in bloom—there sadness never moped.

XV.

The fair perspective opened on the sea;
Beyond, the blue horizon closed the scene :
How calm, how grand in its sublimity
Was the vast ocean, as it rolled serene
Below the distant plains which smiled between.
Around the cottage, darkened o'er by time,
Rocks, loosely bedded, frowned with hideous mien—
Like wretch, whose lineaments are stern with crime—
Above the jar of storms they reared their heads sublime.

XVI.

Here in retirement dwelt a hoary sage,
Remote from all those feverish scenes of life
Which have their different charms for every age,
But teem so much with mischief. Dangers rife
Are blent with man's enjoyments : hate and strife
Clank their rough fetters round the guilty soul.
How oft does murder whet her greedy knife,
Or, while she slily mocks the law's control,
Prepare, with fiendish art, and drug the deadly bowl.

XVII.

Such are among the terrors which abound
In an unholy world. It is not there
That calm is to be sought, enjoyment found ;
Tumultuous joys assail us but to scare
The wearied spirit, and to rivet care
More fixedly within us. Hoarse and loud
Woe, masked in smiles, besets us everywhere.
There the sole garb of virtue is her shroud,
For how should virtue live where vice's legions crowd?

XVIII.

But in retirement, where the constant strife
Of fierce opinion never swells the breeze,
Smooth and unvaried is the track of life.⁶
No sordid feelings on the bosom seize,
And wring the bitters from affliction's lees :
Man blandly here his placid course pursues,
Vexed by no sorrows, tranquil in his ease ;
Strengthened by hope, and bright with heavenly views,
Starts for that goal the soul,—which woe to those who lose.

XIX.

For no foul agents of corruption ply
The secrets of their art : example here
Assumes no form to catch the unpractised eye,
And cheat the soul to wrong ; tranquil and clear
The stream of life runs on, and misery's tear
Sears not the cheek of youth, nor mars its bloom.
The present and the past alike appear
Exempt from human ills ; no sullen gloom
Tracks the swift flight of time, to make our days a doom.

XX.

All the mild virtues of the heart are nurst,
And ne'er polluted by those thoughts impure
By which the sons of sensual mirth are curst;
Whilst from temptation's circumventive lure
It fears no evil, calm and self-secure.
Here every wild emotion is at rest,
And the soul finds a refuge ever sure;
No pangs of thought the placid mind molest—
No whirlwind passions rise to desolate the breast.

XXI.

But such unearthly feelings are unknown
To those⁷ who shun retirement's haunts, and hie,
Like foul bacchantes to the burning zone
Of revelry, and drain his chalice dry.
There, like a plague-blast, in the glowing sky
Contagious poisons taint the steaming air
In crowded chambers, where the sensual eye
Rolls with unhallowed leer, and the frail fair
Meets with a ready smile the fixed and shameless stare.

XXII.

There is in solitude a secret charm
Which, of the sons of wassail, none can know.
There discord never sounds her harsh alarm,
And the meek lamb, unconscious of a foe,
Shuns not his tyrant man; the timid doe
Frisks o'er the lawn and snuffs the western gale;
The hart feels nought of terror's boisterous throe,
But bounds in freedom o'er the dappled dale;—
Whilst at the evening fire goes round the merry tale.

XXIII.

One only daughter could Eumenes boast
The frugal pleasures of his home to share :
To shield this flower from an untimely frost
Was now his only hope, his only care.
Though his board groaned not with luxurious fare,
Nor on it blushed the rich and gorgeous ore,
More than sufficed his humble wants was there;
For nature, with a lavish hand, did pour
Perpetual plenty from her sweet but simple store.

XXIV.

Thus, far from courts and base intrigue removed,
The blooming Bertha spent her hours of prime :
She loved her father, was by him beloved,
And casting incense on the wings of time,
Sweetened his rapid flight. How oft she'd climb
Her native hills, and brave, with fearless tread,
The steep ascent ; there trill her native rhyme,
Nor heed the rocks that frowned above her head,
Within whose murky clefts the eagle's victims bled.

XXV.

Upon her cheek the fondly wooing sun
Had spread a tinge of pure and healthy brown ;
The mantling currents underneath did run,
And through the skin, ne'er ruffled by a frown,
Revealed that tint which makes so sweetly known
That health is at the heart. O'er each bright eye
A tapering arch by heaven's own hand was thrown,
Like the young moon, when in the placid sky
Her slender crescent hangs, joy's herald from on high.

XXVI.

When o'er their mild orbs closed each lovely lid,
The lovelier lashes met and intertwined,
And, respiting the gaze, a moment hid
Those sweet interpreters of heart and mind.
The long dark fringes, when, like lovers kind,
They met embracing, from the gazer's eye
Forced a quick rapture, new and undefined :—
To sketch her full resemblance would defy
The master-touch of art—'twere worse than vain to try.

XXVII.

Bertha was nature's uncorrupted child ;
She knew no evil, nor of evil dreamed :
On life's fair prospect, when she looked, she smiled,
For all was lovely to her sight, or seemed.
Oft when the owl his ominous night-note screamed,
She'd listen to the shrill portentous tone ;
But with no inward dread her bosom teemed—
To her the name of terror was unknown,
For o'er her soul's repose no storm had ever blown.

XXVIII.

Oft would she seek the mountain's spiry brow,
Where the strained eye her form could scarcely gain,
Gaze in mute rapture on the expanse below,—
On all the splendours of the varied plain;
Nor would the dizzy height confuse her brain:
There would she tarry till the sinking sun
Plunged his hot chariot in the cooling main,
Then sigh to think his daily course was run—
Still 'twas the sigh of peace, for sorrow she had none.

XXIX.

As in some solitary glen the rose
Opens its gradual beauties to the dawn,
Loading the wings of every wind that blows
To waft its fragrance o'er the smiling lawn;
So, from the ruthless spoiler's snare withdrawn,
Fair Bertha flourished in her native wild,
Where nothing shunned her path, where kid and fawn
Frolicked before her, as, with aspect mild,
She cheered their nigh approach and at their gambols smiled.

XXX.

Here Bertha dwelt for heaven, and all was rest
Within a bosom not yet warped by guile ;
The very throbbings of her gentle breast
Were peace's lullaby ; and, when the smile
Played round her lips, it seemed as if the while
The sunlight of her soul was beaming there
Its God's bright reflex. How should guilt defile
A thing so pure !—and yet was she as fair
As she was good—oh ! that like her all women were !

XXXI.

There was a sweet unconsciousness about her,
An utter absence of all pride, all art :
Who heard her clear soft tones could never doubt her,
They were the echoes of a guileless heart.
Truth hung upon her lips, whence brightly dart
Its rays divine ; so seraph-like her air,
That her pure frame seemed of her soul a part—
Fit casket for a work so passing rare,
For innocence had fixed its fairest impress there.

XXXII.

Within the circle of her native glen
She passed, without a care, the live-long day :
No wish was hers to join the “ hum of men,”
Who wile in sensual dreams their lives away.
With the young rustics at their evening play
She 'd mix, partaker of their merry glee,
And oft-times join the artless roundelay,
Or thread the dance, with footstep light and free,—
Her life, without its din, one constant jubilee.

XXXIII.

Thus was that lovely seraph of the breast,
Sweet sensibility, matured—a charm
Which they alone can prize who know it best :
All such feel keenly that the fond alarm,
The rapid pulse, emotions quick and warm,
But nourish pain to point the edge of bliss.
Give me those pangs of feeling which disarm
The bosom of its steel, and from the kiss
Of true affection draw the sweets of happiness.

XXXIV.

Oh! there are certain achings of the heart
Which, though they furnish us endurance sad,
I would not, whilst they torture, bid depart,
If I must lose what follows them: the bad
Alone are wretched!—who would not be glad
To bear with woe, if bliss is to succeed?
Grief is joy's touchstone;—joy can ne'er be had
Unmixed with sorrow; 'tis the sinner's meed:
Guilt first provoked the doom—the gladdest heart must bleed.

XXXV.

Secluded from the captivating gaze
Of sensual men, fair Bertha's youth passed on.
The few who saw, saw not without amaze
Mixed with delight, this beauty's paragon:
The general meed of homage had she won
From the boors dwelling near her native cot.
Though she had never basked in luxury's sun,
Still hers might well be deemed a blessed lot,
For earth's best blessings bloomed in that one lovely spot.

XXXVI.

Just eighteen times the bright and eager sun
Around the heavens his flaming sphere had rolled
Since Bertha's life of innocence begun.
Already did her form its charms unfold,
And o'er her polished neck, in rings of gold,
The clustering tresses hung; her lovely face,—
On which the crimson eloquently told
That peace within had fixed its resting place,—
Bore, in each lineament, expression's easy grace.

XXXVII.

Her figure, like the lily's slender stem,
Rose tapering, and expanded, as the spring
Of life attained its prime; the spotless gem
Of virtue—a most rare and precious thing—
Deep in her mind was set; the fretting sting
Of passion never reached her placid breast;
Its potent poisons, fierce and festering,
Ne'er broke the even tenour of her rest,
And next her heart the dove had fearless made its nest.

XXXVIII.

Oh! had the angels when (as some have sung)
They left for earth the bright abodes of heaven,
Looked upon aught so pure, so fair, so young,
With love's chaste raptures—they had been forgiven.
She had no mixture of that earthly leaven,
Which, where infused, through the whole body creeps,
Till the meek spirit from its home is driven:
Her heart was shaped out in her words—there keeps
Faith its unerring guard, and mercy never sleeps.

XXXIX.

Whene'er she paced the wold or mountain glen,
On meditations of high scope intent,
Far from all vulgar or insidious ken,
Her bright eyes beamed with rapture as she went:
Beneath her gentle tread the heather bent,^s
And its fresh fragrance gushed from every pore,
As if to wrap her in an element
Which she alone might breathe: her mental store
Here found a kindred clime, and brightened more and more.

XL.

Her sire upon the tablets of her mind
Had traced her conduct's chart, for 'twas his will
That all its elements should be refined ;
And he instructed her with anxious skill
To shun those paths which slope the way to ill.
Storing her mind from that experienced tongue,
She did his fondest wishes soon fulfil ;
O'er her fair brows wit's sprightly chaplets flung,
And with a steady speed, towards wisdom's summit sprung.

XLI.

Soon through the flowery paths of classic lore
With most intense devotion had she past ;
Nor did her plastic mind disdain to pore
O'er ancient tomes, though dull and overcast
By the crude writ of tedious scholiast.
Eager as diligent, her mind she stored
With various knowledge—knowledge formed to last ;
Not its mere exhalations, so adored
By wits of vapoury brain—by nobler souls abhorred.

XLII.

Nor, as beneath her, past she heedless by
Those light accomplishments which add their grace
To win the heart and captivate the eye.
Oft with her rapid pencil would she trace
The form and varied features of the face ;
Or nature's sterner lineaments, where wild
She frowns, like some huge son of giant race ;
Or, when the moon upon the landscape smiled,
Picture the shadowy scene,—by the sweet task beguiled.

XLIII.

Hers was a mind so exquisitely wrought,
It all but won perfection ; from her eye
The brightest beams of intellect were caught,
Whilst her transcendent soul and spirit high
Peeped forth at every glance to dignify
The form that did enshrine them. Nature here
Seemed to have clothed, for once, mortality
In the fair guise of heaven: without a peer
She trod this grosser earth as if 'twere not her sphere.

XLIV.

Time thus urged on his smooth but swift career,
And o'er her, sorrow shed no withering blight.
From her bleared eye the beldame's blistering tear
Ne'er flowed, to check the lovely girl's delight—
Sweet were her thoughts by day, her dreams by night :
To her this world was paradise, as yet
None of guilt's phantoms dire had crossed her sight ;
And though on heaven her brightest hopes were set,
Still was she blest on earth, nor had one vain regret.

XLV.

Her sire was happy, too ; he saw the day
Of his hopes realized : his setting sun
Was glowing with a bright and cloudless ray—
Though clouds had dimmed it once, ere it had run
The earliest of its course. It had begun
Indeed in darkness, but a glorious light
Is passing from it, ere its task be done.
Life is, in truth, a scene of dark and bright,
Where oft the clearest day succeeds the blackest night.

XLVI.

The good old man!—as kind as he was good!
His daughter fondly loved him; and, to be
The object of a love so hallowed, stood
The fairest proof of worth in high degree.
His friends all revered this worth, and he
Deserved the kindly fellowship of all;
Whilst Bertha deemed—the purer angel she—
That in this world, to her no world of gall,
There lived no other man so free from vice's thrall.

XLVII.

So happy was he now, that scarce he felt
The flight of time, that, as it moves, destroys.
Before the throne of God he daily knelt
To bless him for his mercies. Those alloys
Which guilt so mingles with our sweetest joys,
Were no more tasted here; he now drank deep
Of that pure cup which only never elays,
When virtue and religion jointly steep
Those spices in the draught, that from pollution keep.

XLVIII.

All the stern hurricanes of life seemed o'er—
Long had he lived uninjured by their dint;
Their devastations harassed him no more,
And every hour had something joyous in't.
Repose had softened too his bosom's flint,
For early woes had hardened it. Before
His path was strewed the wealth from nature's mint;
And he looked onward now for a rich store
Of bliss, nor recked how soon affliction's goad might gore.

XLIX.

But who shall scan the future? As we pace
Along life's chequered route, we feel, we see
On this world's surface—grief's abiding place,
All that there is of bliss or misery.
In our brief passage, jocund though we be,
Time soon may drug with pain our draught of joy.
Dark is the prospect of futurity,
And who shall tell what crosses may annoy;
What cares in comfort's spring may mix their foul alloy!

L.

No one can know to what his days may tend,
Whether or smooth or rough his course shall run,
Or how this mortal pilgrimage may end—
So darkly is the web of being spun.
But God's decrees are wise ; and if our sun
Of happiness grow dim, still wherefore fear ?
That light which only in this world begun,
Will brighter shine in an eternal sphere,
Where bliss shall glad the more, the less our pleasure here.

LI.

Here oft, while joy's fresh flower is full in bloom,
Misfortune's sickle sweeps it to the dust ;
Woe springs to vigorous growth on pleasure's tomb,
And gives her awful lesson of distrust.
Though peace may reign awhile, the insidious rust
Of latent sorrow oft will mar its ray ;
But wisdom knows, in all her knowledge just,
This world 's the transient temple of decay—
Here wretchedness and mirth must wear alike away.

LII.

Where now are Troy and mightier Babylon?
On their proud site the earth is wild and bare—
O'er them stern time has a full victory won,
And they are mingled with the things that were.
Thus works destruction ; from his secret lair
He skulks abroad, to mar what man has made—
Decay, slow mining, meets us everywhere.
Earth's pageantries are fugitive—here fade
All things alike—the debts of nature must be paid.

LIII.

Shall we then pine and fret because our lot
Is not a blest one here, when sin, hell-born,
O'er our fair destiny has cast her blot,
And to the rose of bliss attached a thorn?
Nay, sinner, never tax thy God with scorn
Of his own works ; if ills on earth assail,
'Tis thy guilt's penalty ; when thou art torn
By that fierce vulture, conscience,—pause, and hail
The chastening, and let virtue over vice prevail.

LIV.

It was a wise decree that man should bear
Affliction's burthen in this vale of tears :
Were all enjoyment without grief or care,
How would he pass the current of his years ?
Seduced by pleasure, hailed by vice's cheers,
Prurient desires would taint his easy heart.
Alas ! what were our hopes without our fears !
There is a mercy in affliction's smart—
It heals those wounds of sin which mock all human art.

LV.

Alas ! poor Bertha, little deemed she now
That aught could mar the tenour of her rest ;
Smooth as the polished mirror was her brow,
For not a pang disturbed her gentle breast :
Her guileless heart, which woe had ne'er oppress'd,
Throbb'd with no drear forebodings, for she felt
Heaven's mercy, and the blessed boon confest—
As yet her shock of suffering was not dealt,
But sorrow soon found way where peace so calmly dwelt.

LVI.

Eumenes saw at length the ripening bloom,
Like moonlight on the stream, o'erspread her cheek :
There glowed fresh health, and shed its soft perfume
From lips that breathed such tones as angels speak.
He watched the vivid fires of genius break
From her dark eye, and busy hope began
To gain a giant's strength, as fear grew weak.
His cup of life with blessings now o'erran—
He felt there was on earth at least one happy man.

LVII.

And was he thankless? No! his bosom glowed
With a most holy rapture, and he gave
The praise to Him who had alone bestowed
Such unrequited blessings. To the grave
He now looked forward,—when the solemn stave
Should swell above his dust,—without a sigh.
He had no further blessings here to crave,
And his soul kindled in his heavenward eye
As he poured forth his prayer to the great God on high.

LVIII.

Of life he now had reached beyond the prime ;
And though the snow of years had blanch'd his head,
His powers had mock'd the wasting might of time,
And o'er his cheek health's colour yet was spread :
Still was his gait erect, and firm his tread;
Nor had the lines of age usurp'd his brow.
O'er him content her sweetest influence shed,
Nor had he any wants or wishes now,
Except to hear his child pronounce the marriage vow.

END OF CANTO I.

CANTO II.

The hope whose cradle is of flowers
That have but one sweet spring,
May still be constant to our bowers,
Though ever on the wing :
And hopes that seem to pass away,
Or share in the earth's blight,
They change but as our hearts decay—
Are constant, though less bright.

Rev. Henry Stebbing.

CANTO THE SECOND.

Felices ter et amplius
Quos irrupta tenet copula, nec malis
Divulsis querimoniis
Superna citius solvet amor die.

Horace.

I.

A STRANGER now was welcomed at the cot,
One who had quitted in his childhood's prime
The dear land of his birth, to trace his lot
In other regions of a rougher clime,
Where oft refinement does but varnish crime.¹
There, whilst experience spread her varied store,
Collected from the fruitful womb of time,
He read her painful lessons o'er and o'er,
To wisdom added much, but yet to virtue more.

II.

Amid the thronged communities of men
Must knowledge be explored, experience gained :
'Tis from the tongue, as well as from the pen,
That either must be sought, and both obtained.
Where the young judgment, rash and unrestrained,
Is ripe for service, it were well and wise
To give it scope, nor hold too tightly reined.
'Tis mid the busy world we learn to prize,
By contrast with its ills, the blessings of the skies.

III.

We live but for instruction ;² without this,
What were the world and all its pageantries ?
For knowledge in the crown of human bliss
Is its most radiant gem : the noblest ties
That link this passing world's communities
In fellowship, to knowledge all are due,³
And happiest they who are most truly wise.
Religion will supply the ready clue
To those who wisdom's maze with honest minds pursue.

IV.

Edgar was left an orphan by his sire
Ere quickening thought had reason's sway confessed;
He recked it not, for then the glowing fire
Of mind was in the spark—its light repressed.
Eumenes now the hapless babe caressed,
And by his care a parent's loss supplied;
The boy his infant gratitude expressed,
And, with a sense of what he owed him, tried
To fix his guardian's love, nor was that love denied.

V.

His mother, at that agonizing hour
When the first curse assailed her fainting frame,
Had yielded to his all-pervading power
Who spares nor prince nor slave; and when he came
To cast her to the worms, and sweep her name
From the fair annals of recording time,
Her husband sank beneath the shock: the same
Cold grave enshrouds them; in their being's prime
Both left this world of cares for heaven's eternal clime.

VI.

Eumenes mourned them with a brother's love ;
And, ere the fountain of his grief was dried,
Like a protecting spirit from above
Took to his home their offspring, and supplied
The loss of sire and mother. Woe betide
That stubborn heart which melts not at the sight
Of the poor orphan's tears !—Young Edgar tried
How his protector he might best requite,
And did his kind behests with a most pure delight.

VII.

Quick sped the days of infancy along,
Unchecked his joys by incidental ill,
Till thought had birth and intellect grew strong,
And gave a nobler impulse to the will.
His guileless heart had no alarms to still,
For who in childhood drinks woe's troubled spring ?
Bliss did its bounteous measure more than fill,
And strewed the waste o'er time's unwearied wing,
Who urged his steady flight unstayed, unnoticed.

VIII.

His father to Eumenes had been dear,
Both equal sharers in one painful birth.
Twin-born, they loved and dotingly, nor fear
Of guile in either marred their mutual worth,
Till death—the mightiest tyrant upon earth—
Broke the sweet union, and obscured the sun
On joy's horizon : then contentment's dearth
And pleasure's gloomier obsequies begun—
Then o'er a brother's peace sorrow her victory won.

IX.

Eumenes, in his earlier years, had been
A soldier, and his country's battles fought.
Much hard and deadly service had he seen,
And with his blood a dear experience bought :
A gallant reputation he had sought
Amid the scenes of carnage and of scathe.
But earthly good is e'er with evil fraught ;
For, whilst his fame was ripening, slander's breath
Cast o'er that fame a taint—more dreaded oft than death.

X.

He had deserved no slander, and her tongue
Roused all the angry feelings of his soul ;
They were most ardent then, for he was young,
And his fierce passions under slight control.
O'er his intrepid heart there quickly stole
A deep and fixed resolve ; with flashing eye
He sought the vile defamer,—for the whole
Was envy's work,—threw in his teeth the lie,
And dared him to the field his prowess there to try.

XI.

They fought ; the slanderer fell, and then, alas !
Remorse stung deeply the young soldier's breast.
How death drowns all our enmities !—they pass,
Like whirlwinds spent, and sink at once to rest !
Eumenes now, by a new grief oppress—
For on his soul there was a crimson stain—
With deepest ruth his damning guilt confest.
A burning fever fixed upon his brain,
And his probed heart was wrung, nor was it wrung in vain.

XII.

There is for all a portion of distress ;
The tenure by which human life is held
Has this severe condition. Happiness
Leaps from the grasp, and will not be compelled :
Sometimes her false light shines, but scarce beheld
Ere fades the bright delusion on the view.
Where once the flickering meteor is dispelled,
It were a vain endeavour to pursue—
Life's but a maze at best, and this Eumenes knew.

XIII.

He left his country for a distant land,
Where his calm days were spent in sweet repose :
Nor was it long ere he joined heart and hand
To a young bride, and soon forgot his woes.
Years thus past smoothly on, but misery chose
Once more to bruise him when his Alice died.
Bertha, though but an infant then, to close
The angry wound, with artless effort, tried,
And in her father's heart her mother's loss supplied.

XIV.

Such was young Edgar's guardian : he had been
In suffering's severe ordeal tried,
And therefore could for others feel, I ween,
To whom heaven's poorest blessings were denied.
His heart was ample as the world is wide,
And pity, like a cherub, nestled there :
As time pursued his hurried course, he sighed
To think what woes are scattered everywhere
Around this busy world, that feed the worm of care.

XV.

The infant Edgar, to his charge consigned,
With fond concern he nourished as his own,
And, like a father, wisely disciplined
A trust so sacred on his bounty thrown.
Soon Edgar's years of infancy had flown,
And boyhood's rosy blush his cheeks o'erspread ;
Within his brain the seeds of wit were sown,
And grew productive in that genial bed,
Whilst books, with nurture fit, the rising harvest fed.

XVI.

Mark childhood's blessed era! 'tis a dream
Of sweet unconsciouness—a living vision,
Where in imagination's kindling beam
The forms of fancy bask, as in derision
Of all those ills which oft, in stern collision,
Meet and condense their energies, and pour
On some unconscious head, with fierce decision,
The mingled torrent down!—the sportive hour
Of childhood's ever free from misery's withering power;

XVII.

For then we look not onward, then our views
Are to the happy present all confined :
Across our path no thorns affliction strews,
And the young thoughts soar free as mountain wind :
The soul is gentle as the heart is kind,
For evil is a stranger to it then :
To all that may be, innocently blind.
Nothing but pleasure, how and where and when
"Twill smile, pervades it—wounded but to heal again.

XVIII.

There are no fretting heartaches then, to tell
Of by-gone happiness ; the sparkling tear
Which falls o'er childhood's cheek is not the knell
Of pleasures just departed, nor of fear
The doleful harbinger ; it is a mere
Bright cloud that passes o'er a brighter sun,
And leaves, or seems to leave, the disk more clear.
Alas ! when infancy's brief course is run,
Peace wraps her head in storms—the war of life 's begun.

XIX.

Oh ! I remember well—that hour, alas !
Is long since “ numbered with the things o'erpast ”—
When in the future's ever-clouded glass
I marked a scene of things not doomed to last !
Those pageants to the earth have long been cast
Which in my youthful fancy I had reared ;
All have been levelled by the angry blast
Of disappointment : still my heart is cheered,
For hope's bright star is up, from clouds and darkness cleared.

XX.

And, Edgar, such thy childhood ! nothing then
Clouded the prospect of thy future day !
Amid the quiet of thy native glen
Thy early years of boyhood passed away.
Around thee an enchanting prospect lay,
Nor didst thou look beyond for future pleasure !
Whether engaged in study or in play,
Thy soul imbibed enjoyment without measure—
To thee thy home was heaven, in sooth earth's sweetest treasure.

XXI.

The little Bertha was thy playmate when
Fresh in the beauty of her babyhood :
Together o'er the hill and through the glen
Would ye both wander, till the mantling blood
Tinged each fair cheek ; and oft, in sportive mood,
Exchange—pure souls !—the innocent caress.
Ah ! it was then that guardian angels stood
As nightly watchers your repose to bless,
And all was bright around, for all was happiness.

XXII.

The stripling grew in stature and in years—
There was a glory brightening o'er his mind :
Already on his open brow appears
The fair-writ index of a soul refined ;
Where virtue's artless feelings were combined
With all that honour knew of good or great.
His heart had not yet learned to be unkind,
But at the cries of woe responsive beat ;
For pity there had sought and found secure retreat.

XXIII.

But he was destined now for other scenes,
Where he might trace, with an observant eye,
The principles of men, their "ways and means,"
And learn to live, that he might learn to die.
For 'tis amidst the vast community
That we can study best the heavenly plan,
In all its wonderful variety,
Displayed in that stupendous creature, man,
Whose mind can grasp a world—whose life is but a span.

XXIV.

Such as have known how sad it is to leave
The home they love; to look on all that 's dear
For the last time, it may be, and bereave
The heart of all it dotes on : not a tear
To cool the burning throbs which tell how near
'Tis breaking, with the keenest anguish wrung ;—
They who have felt all this, may fancy here
What keen emotions Edgar's bosom stung,
When in his anxious ear the farewell accents rung.

XXV.

Up to his throat the strong emotion leapt,
And with a quick, convulsive agony
Choked his free utterance ; for a while it kept
The dry tongue mute, until a bursting sigh,
Poured from the wrung breast's inmost cavity,
Assuaged his torture, fierce, indeed, but brief.
He scarce could falter forth the fond "good bye,"
But pressed his guardian's hand in silent grief,
Till the big tear found way, and gave a short relief.

XXVI.

With heaving bosom and averted eye,
He hurried from his guardian's warm embrace,
And left, with many a melancholy sigh,
The lonely cot—his infant dwelling place.
The scalding tears streamed down his cheeks apace,
As his tongue faintly gave its last farewell.
Towards ocean's liquid waste he turned his face,
And saw the world's dark troubles in its swell—
His heart's convulsive throbs defied all power to quell.

XXVII.

Ten rapid years beneath a temperate sun,
The orphan boy in swift improvement spent;
And, though his manhood's dawn had scarce begun,
Yet genius had her best assistance lent
To feed his mind with fruitful aliment.
The happy period of return drew nigh,
And soon dispelled all clouds of discontent:
Bright gleams of promised bliss illumed his eye,
As the horizon closed on Europe's colder sky.

XXVIII.

How his young spirit leaped, when from the shore
Swept the light pinnacle, and the pebbly strand
Faded before his view!—the sullen roar
Of the stern waters, foaming to the land,
Poured music on his soul more sweet and bland
Than the mild curfew to the ploughman's ear.
How his heart bounded when his eager hand
Grasped the rough cordage, and, 'mid many a cheer,
He sprung upon the deck, and thought of raptures near.

XXIX.

Ah! he remembers well the time gone by,
When he left all he loved; and the warm tear
Now gathered slowly in each hope-lit eye,
As towards his native land the ship drew near.
Still to the heart there clung sometimes a fear,
Lest he should never more his home regain :
Oft-times, in spite of hope, forebodings drear
Would with dark fantasies o'ercloud his brain,
When brighter thoughts erept in to cheer his mind in vain.

XXX.

Go where we may, the land where first we viewed
The glorious light can never be forgot :
Though 't were a sad and dreary solitude,
Still home 's a dear and consecrated spot,
To which the absent fancy loves to allot
Utopian blessings ; for we picture there
All that the social mind displeases not—
All that the fancy frames of good and fair ;
And this world's genuine joys are found no other where.

XXXI.

Go ask the exile what his pangs of soul,
When absent from the land that gave him birth.
That pigmy race who freeze beneath the Pole
Seek not the comforts of a stranger hearth :
Each country has its own peculiar worth,
And for its sons retains a secret charm,
Which never can be found on foreign earth.
The swarth barbarian feels his bosom warm
When thoughts of home arise—they hush grief's lashing storm.

XXXII.

Take the rough savage from his native wild
Where, from the haunts of more enlightened men
Sequestered, never in his path have smiled
The cherub groups of pleasure,—what will then
Be his bereavement!—for his native glen,
Filled with congenial beasts of prey, he sighs—
His fondest wish to court its gloom again :
Used but to view the naked earth and skies,
His simple mind disdains all earth-born pageantries.

XXXIII.

Breathes there a man, of mind so dense and dead⁴
As not to hang with fond idolatry
O'er that dear land for which his sires have bled—
The land too of his own nativity,
The country of his home ! If such there be,
Poor worm of narrow soul—if soul be thine—
Thou hast disgraced its immortality !
The ice of apathy has dimmed its shine :—
Great God of heaven and earth, may such be never mine !

XXXIV.

Edgar approached the shore for which he sighed ;
And as fair breezes wooed the swelling sails,
Through his full heart rushed joy's impetuous tide.
As his ear drinks the music of the gales
His pulse beats quick ; no more his spirit quails,
But transport swells within him, as his glance
Darts keenly forward ; hope o'er fear prevails,
Whilst in his brain the warm ideas dance,
Until he's quite absorbed in rapture's dizzy trance.

XXXV.

Oft from the prow he casts a wistful eye
O'er the vast world of waters, which appear
One wide interminable waste, where lie
Deep in their coral caves the costly gear
Of kings and mighty monarchies ; for here,
In all their unexplored immensity,
Are piled the stores of ages ; deep and clear
Above them rolls the illimitable sea,
And to a wondering world proclaims the Deity.

XXXVI.

Here what a scope for thought, when, by the storm
Lashed into rage, the chaffing billows roll ;
When howling blasts the face of heaven deform,
And fill with dire alarms the daunted soul :
When o'er the briny Alps—bare every pole—
The groaning vessel leaps against the skies,
Scarcely obedient to the helm's control,
What mingled feelings in the breast arise—
What terrors gather there amidst its wild surprise !

XXXVII.

The port at length is gained, and by the lee
The boat is lowered with a merry roar.
Now through the surface of the glassy sea
The swift light pinnace flies beneath the oar.
Edgar the distance measures o'er and o'er,
His keen eye darting towards the welcome land :
The space soon lessens—now they gain the shore—
And as he springs upon the crowded strand
He feels the anxious grasp of many a friendly hand.

XXXVIII.

Imagine now the frequent fond caress,
The anxious question, and the prompt reply.
Bertha in all her virgin loveliness
Approached, with hurried step and downcast eye,
To meet the glowing youth : she knew not why,
But her heart fluttered with a new delight
Beyond the measure far of common joy ;
Her smooth clear skin was tinged with blushes bright,
And her frame trembled too, in pleasure's pure despite.

XXXIX.

Eumenes felt upon his fading cheek
The slow tear down its long-dried channel roll ;
He pressed the proffered hand, but could not speak,
So full the warm emotions of his soul.
Such are the pains of pleasure, when the goal
Of hope is won—sweet sufferable throes
Too pleasurable painful to control !
O'er each fond bosom stole a sweet repose,
Like that mild summer calm when day is at its close.

XL.

When Edgar left for other lands his home,
Bertha had yet but eight brief summers seen ;
When he returned at length, no more to roam,
Hers was the blooming beauty of eighteen.
Now o'er her breast was drawn the kerchief screen,
Which hid its beauties from the wanton eye ;
And she had such exaltedness of mien,
That the quaint rustic, as he passed her by,
Stopped for a while to gaze, and gazed, nor wondered why.

XLI.

Oh ! what a heavenly sight it is to see
Young beauty rising into loveliness,
When, from the giddy freaks of childhood free,
She comes before our sight as if to bless
The eye she ravishes ; and pure no less
Than spring's precocious violet, when it blows
In vernal sweetness o'er the wilderness :
Virtue, her guardian angel, round her throws
The fragrance of the skies, in which she lives and grows.

XLII.

And who shall wonder if, as poets feign,
The forest's monarch, in his savage might,
Has crouched at beauty's feet, and shook his mane
In the redundance of his wild delight,
And purred and basked and fawned before her sight?
Woman's the magnet of this stormy sphere,
When through her soul shines virtue's hallowed light:
Without her, there were nought but misery here;
For what would man become if she were never near

XLIII.

To sooth his anguish, when affliction wrings
Its festering bitters o'er his bursting heart;
To blunt the arrows which misfortune flings,
And with that balsam staunch the bleeding part,
Which she alone can minister! Sin's dart
How oft by her plucked out, when, firm and deep
Within man's breast infix'd with deadly smart!⁵
She like an angel hovers o'er his sleep,
When through his burning veins disease's poisons creep.

XLIV.

While Bertha blushed before him, Edgar's heart
Danced with ecstatic joy as he beheld
Her lovely form, and knew her nobler part
To be the lovelier still : he scarcely quelled
His transports on beholding her, but, spelled
By that form's lustre, stood in mute amaze :
His bounding blood was painfully repelled ;
And as his eye to hers he dared to raise,
His vivid glance betrayed a mute but ardent praise.

XLV.

He now observed the change in Bertha's form
With rapture to his soul before unknown ;
He left a sapling shrinking from the storm,
But found a plant to full perfection grown.
Soon did his heart the force of beauty own—
For who can baffle her almighty power ?
There love's prolific seeds were quickly sown,
Took root, and grew, and ripened into flower,
And gathered deeper bloom from every passing hour.

XLVI.

The maid at first by fits on Edgar gazed,
But with a side-long glance, demure and coy;
When to his manly brow her sight was raised,
She felt the sudden thrill of inward joy.
He who had left his home a blooming boy,
With all the riper charms of man returned :—
Soon in his breast, too ardent to destroy,
The flame of love's bright altar purely burned,
And love's endearing task he most adeptly learned;—

XLVII.

A task o'er which 'tis passing sweet to pore,
For ever grateful and for ever new :
How we delight to con his lessons o'er
Whilst our warm thoughts provoke the fond review !
As to the pole the trembling steel is true,
So the heart hovers o'er his sacred shrine.
How does young hope love's hallowed joys pursue—
Joys which are only second to divine,
When from their sacred source the rays of virtue shine !

XLVIII.

As the pale star across the desert drear
Guides the lone wanderer through the gloom of night,
So love—the pole-star of our brief career—
Through this mixed world of sorrow and delight,
Brightens our course and cheers our dreary plight;
And when man's purpose here his influence guides,
Our souls emerge from darkness into light :
The sweetest earthly blessings he provides—
He best protects, and steers through passion's stormy tides.

XLIX.

Yet oft he plays the wanton in the heart,
Proud to establish there his fickle sway.
Through woman's eye he aims the wily dart
Which strikes to sting and goad, if not to slay.
Whene'er we fall to moody griefs a prey,
He calls on woman's cheek the witching smile
That works the soft emotions into play :
In action secret, prone to craft and wile,
His ways, though often pure, still oftener lead to guile.

L.

How variously he slopes the way to crime,
Oft hurling ruin on his victim's head!
How many has he blighted in their prime!
How many hearts have on his altar bled!
How has he swelled the number of the dead,
No more on earth from the dark grave to rise!
Still he pours blessings on the good man's head—
The soul with lofty longings purifies,
Prepares it for its God, and lifts it to the skies.

LI.

When on the cheek begins the darkening down,
With gentle impulse first his power he tries:
The bounding blood with quicker gush is thrown
From its full source, whilst to the raptured eyes
The vivid beams of admiration rise.
Then beauty holds her empire, and the frame
Writhes under those keen pangs which love supplies:
He kindles then that fierce and quenchless flame,
Which, while it glows within, no human power can tame.

LII.

Untainted love is a most heavenly thing,
And heaven its origin, for "God is love."
From it the soul's sublimest motions spring,
Catching a sacred lustre from above
That shapes it for the skies, and, like the dove
Scared from her nest, bends thitherward its flight,
When stubborn griefs its lingering joys remove.
This love, and this alone, can cure the blight
Of sorrow, and restore the bosom's lost delight.⁶

LIII.

Edgar now bowed to that enchanting power
Which man's so little able to subdue :
He felt that love's imperishable flower
Within his breast with rich luxuriance grew.
Timid of hope, he dared not yet pursue
His passion's object with confession's tale :
Patient he watched to catch some kindly clue
That might unfold if love did yet assail
Her o'er whose spotless heart he studied to prevail.

LIV.

In the mute language of the eyes unskilled,
Their silent eloquence on him was lost.
His fervent soul one sacred passion filled ;
And what were life if once that love were crossed !
All this he felt : and by those thoughts engrossed,
No other object charmed his eager sight
Save her, whom, when upon the billows tossed,
He had arrayed in charms supremely bright,
Though there, in truth, they shone but with diminished light.

LV.

Oft would he watch the motion of her eye
To catch the meaning of its placid beam :
But here the search could hardly aught descry
To realize his hope's delicious dream ;
For what she was she almost feared to seem :
And though her heart all chilling thoughts denied,
Scarcely could Edgar yet her purpose deem.
While from herself she strove the truth to hide,
Still through her ardent veins poured love's resistless tide.

LVI.

For she was mortal, though without a taint
Of loose or grovelling passion ; and she felt
As chaste a love as eremite or saint
Might have blessed God to feel ; and when she knelt
Before that God who had in mercy dealt
A happiness to her, for earth too rare,—
Warmed by that love, in holier raptures melt
Her deep pure sympathies ; for she was fair
In spirit and in frame, as spotless angels are.

LVII.

She had a sweet timidity that seemed
Almost to blush at its own artlessness.
Without her, heaven—so Edgar would have deemed,
Though rash the thought—had lacked one blessing less :
She, of all earthly things most formed to bless,
Seemed in the sky of his bright destiny
To shine, the sunlight of his happiness ;
And when they met, no cold observer by,
His soul's whole impulse rushed into his sparkling eye.

LVIII.

Distant at first his anxious glance she met,
And from its vivid beam abashed recoiled ;
But use—for young was her experience yet—
Soon to the eye's soft language reconciled.
Eumenes looked on either as his child,—
The only objects of his earthly care,—
While schemes for their behoof his days beguiled.
Associates every hour and every where,
They had of this world's bliss a large and mutual share.

LIX.

As in the garden of the new-born earth,
Where all was perfect, and when all was young,
Before the progeny of sin had birth;—
When all the glorious stars together sung
Hosannas to their God; ere vice had wrung
The bosoms of the blest ones—blest as they,—
Yet by no pangs of guilty sorrow stung,—
The youthful lovers paced life's flowery way,
And time itself seemed loth to close so bright a day.

LX.

With what keen transport oft would Edgar gaze
On Bertha's beauty, till his kindled eye
Sent forth the flashes of its rapt amaze,
Catching a radiant lustre from the sky
Where the bright sun, in living light, on high
Pursued his course o'er the blue plain of heaven.
To her, whose pure heart echoed back his sigh,
From its chaste source in fond dismission driven,
He poured his secret forth, with artless rapture given :—

LXI.

“ Bertha, I feel within my throbbing breast,
“ And 'tis, in truth, a transport thus to feel,
“ Emotions such as may not be repress,
“ Lest my full bosom burst. Shall I appeal
“ To a stern arbiter? 'Tis thou canst heal,
“ And thou alone, the medicable smart
“ Of a most holy love : thy future weal
“ On earth, in heaven—whose fairest type thou art,
“ Will ever live in each fond purpose of my heart.”

LXII.

'Twas thus the doating Edgar dared avow
To Bertha's ear his love : in silent ruth
She gazed unblushing on his manly brow,
And tracing there the lineaments of truth,
Looked, with consenting smile, upon the youth.
Both now had reached the climax of their bliss :
Their vows were pledged and registered ; in sooth
Their lips had interchanged the willing kiss,—
And genuine love can know no holier joy than this.

LXIII.

The sacred token here of all we feel
That lifts our spirits from this grosser earth ;
'Tis of the heart's acknowledged bond the seal
That with love's own impression stamps its worth.
The doting mother at her infant's birth
Bestows it fondly with rejoicing tears ;
Go where we may, amid affection's dearth
'Tis still its tribute ;—e'en the savage cheers
With this sweet pledge the swarth companion of his years.

LXIV.

Thus their affections ripened, thus they grew
Upon each other's hearts, and, rooted there,
Nothing was hidden from their mutual view ;
For neither had a thought, a fear, a care,
Which both did not, in equal measure, share.
When she poured forth the treasures of her mind,
His brightening glance did its mute praise declare,
As to her honied words his ear inclin'd—
Words which might well have charmed the wisest of mankind.

LXV.

Nor were his words by her regarded less,
For all he said to her indeed was dear,
And they flowed from him with a sweet excess.
With what absorbing interest would she hear
His tongue's melodious utterance, deep but clear,
When, with a soul-subduing energy,
He poured the Mantuan's music on her ear !
She'd watch the vivid glances of his eye,
And kindle as he glowed, when none but he was by.

LXVI.

As bright and cloudless as their native skies,
As mild and fragrant as prolific May,
The prospect smiles before them as they rise
Fresh from the feast of joy : the placid ray
Of peace beams o'er them, hallowing their day,
And withering in its bud the growth of woe :
She strews content's fair flowers upon their way,
Whose essences exhale where'er they go,
And o'er their earthly path a heavenly fragrance throw.

END OF CANTO II.

CANTO III.

Oh! of all mortal pangs, there 's nought
So dreadful as the death of thought.

Allan Cunningham.

CANTO THE THIRD.

The luxury of love, its glow suppress,
Sweet, indescribable, pervades the breast;
Rapt, sleeping or awake, he could not tell—
But all the vision was remembered well.
And when at length it faded, there remained
Something unearthly; every sense retained
A sweet impression, glowing, bright and free
Like that ineffable wild ecstasy
Left in the ravished mind in mystic eve
By distant music trembling on the wave:
When the soul cannot tell if from within,
Its magic numbers wakened, does begin
The deep, sweet harmony that floats about,
Or if it finds its origin without.

Abdallah. By J. A. St. John.

I.

BEYOND the wood that screened Eumenes' cot
Young Wallace lived, a youth of goodly kin;
Fortune had marked with competence his lot,
And though the beard now darkened on his chin,
His life had 'scaped the deadlier taint of sin.
Edgar and Wallace knew each other well—
Each did the other's heart to friendship win;—
How bland their feelings, they alone may tell
Who have confessed the force of friendship's powerful spell.

II.

How tender are her soothings when within
Those warm emotions rise and live and glow—
Free from the noisome feculence of sin—
Which they of gentle spirit only know !
The milk of human kindness sweetens so
The heart's asperities, the bitter feud,
When friendship's blossoms in the bosom grow ;
That God's own image seems to be renewed,
Whose brightness in our souls transgression had subdued.

III.

Oh ! what were man, if friendship never threw
Her halo round his destiny's pale star ?¹
If he her sweet sensations never knew,
He ne'er could tell what this world's blessings are :
And, but for her, how would its sorrows mar,
With shadows dark, the sunshine of his years !
Full oft she ruptures misery's rigid bar,
Casting a lustre o'er misfortune's tears,
Sooths the dejected soul, and brightens as she cheers !

IV.

Wallace and Edgar, in their childhood's prime,
Had interchanged the pledges of esteem :
Their young hearts, each as glowing as their clime,
Had warmed and ripened in affection's beam.
As both together down time's gentle stream
Held their smooth course beneath the sparkling ray
Of boyhood's cheerful sunshine, hope's fair dream
Spread like the light of truth before their way,
And not a cloud arose to shade their youthful day.

V.

Both were of equal age, and neither had
Brother or sister his regards to share.
In this their lot was anything but sad,
For oft—too oft, alas!—the thorns of care
In kindred bosoms fix, and, festering there,
Taint all the finer feelings of the soul.
The links of love oft snap, and lack repair ;
But severed once, disunion mars the whole—
Released affection flies, and mocks the will's control.²

VI.

They had been much in early youth together,
And their young friendships strengthened with their years.
As the bright orb of day in April weather
Smiles o'er the face of nature through her tears,
So did the love of each, above his peers,
Break through the transient gloom of youthful sorrow,
Nor had time quenched it yet ; it still appears
From his subverting hand new strength to borrow,
And warmer feelings grow with each succeeding morrow.

VII.

Beyond the millions of his fellow men
Nature had deigned to Wallace nothing rare ;
No muse had held him subject for her pen,
Nor had the sculptor deemed him worth his care.
But though his form was not beyond compare,
His mind was pure, unwarped by fierce desire ;
Virtue had left her best impressions there,
And, though to genius he could ne'er aspire,
There still was in him much to cherish and admire.

VIII.

Seldom had Wallace from his native glen
Emerged to mingle with the courtly throng ;
Yet though untutored in the ways of men,
He could acutely judge 'twixt right and wrong.
Brought up to rural habitudes, the song
Of the fair peasant had for him a charm
Too rarely found your high-bred maids among.
The rough yet healthy pastimes of the farm
Furnished his boyish sports, but these were free from harm.

IX.

The lofty pageantries, the vain parade
Of wealth, he looked on as that gaudy glare
Which only glitters for a while, to fade
When spots or canker shall have gathered there.³
As rusts the steel, in spite of every care,
So wealth's factitious splendours must grow dim :
The ills of life beset them everywhere,
And therefore they possessed no charms for him,
While life's more homely cup was sweetened to the brim.

X.

Oft would he mingle with the rustic throng,
And merrily partake their noisy glee,
Thread the rude dance, or join the festive song
With right good will—with spirit light and free.
Toil was his exercise; in labour he
Secured at once his profit, pleasure, health—
Life's best, though far least valued, property—
And which he prized above all earthly wealth,
Though oft it slips our grasp, like a false friend, by stealth.

XI.

Wallace was blessed with an abundant share,
And what he had he prized; his hardy frame
Evinced that vice had not yet harboured there.
By nought disturbed, content where'er he came—
Whether in sunshine or in storm, the same—
No change of season wrought a change in him:
A manly form was his ambitious aim,
Hoping that health, with strength of nerve and limb,
Would keep woe's harpies off till life's bright spark grew dim.

XII.

Acquirements he had few, but still was read
In all the lighter lore of modern days,
For prosing pedagogues had stored his head
Enough to fix the clown's unstinted praise.
He felt his brows unsuited for the bays
Which genius boldly wreathes around his own ;
Yet he pursued those unfrequented ways
That lead to virtue's shunned but blissful throne—
Wit gains no choice with her—the heart is prized alone.

XIII.

His heart was worth the prizing ; it was stored
With all that renders hearts of worth to man ;
Religion's image there was deeply scored,
For, as his infancy's career he ran,
Her lovely buddings in his soul began :
As he pressed onward in the race of years,
He grew the darling leader of his clan ;
And whilst his bark through life's calm sea he steers,
She to the haven points, and greets him with her cheers.

XIV.

He had a mother, and she claimed a care
Which he, with filial tenderness, supplied.
With years decrepit now, she felt aware
That death must soon her wasting powers deride.
The tender son his best endeavours tried
To smooth her passage to that doubtful bourne,
Where, 'mid the gorgeous wrecks of mortal pride,
Monarchs and slaves shall meet—whence none return ;
But which all flesh must pass, to triumph or to mourn.

XV.

Wallace was owner of a house, and land
That more than answered life's necessities :
Three hundred slaves acknowledged his command,
Who lived ungalled by crushing tyrannies.⁴
They never knew those stern severities
Which the swarth bondman suffers in his chains ;
Their master felt those near equalities
Which heaven 'twixt lord and humbler slave ordains :
He studied well their weal—their love endeared his pains.

XVI.

E'en bondage may be free from wretchedness,
When they who lord it o'er their fellow men
Can pity and be kind ; for sorrowless
Might be the roughest life, if, from her den,
Oppression ne'er stalked forth to crush ; but when
Man plays the brute with that most abject race
Who writhe beneath the scourge of slavery, then,
Like an impetuous courser in the race,
Peace from the bosom flies with quick and fearful pace.

XVII.

Wallace was loved by all ; the palsyng thought
Of thralldom ne'er untranquillized their mind :
In rusted heaps their fetters lay unsought,
And the tough thong, for bloody stripes designed,
Was flung, an useless agent, to the wind.
Still Wallace was unblessed ; within him now
Awoke a feeling, new and undefined :
Time scarce had written man upon his brow,
When to the force of love his heart began to bow.

XVIII.

It is a fearful time when youth begins
By nature's law to ripen into man ;
'Tis then that busy vice so slyly spins
Her most insidious web—accursed plan !
Within whose meshes caught, no mortal can
Free the snared victim : it is God alone
Can drag him from the hag's tenacious span.
But Wallace knew her not ; to virtue prone,
His bosom was her shrine—her feelings were his own.

XIX.

He felt his heart assailed, yet dared not tell
The tender secret to that only ear
To which he wished it known : a sacred spell
Kept his tongue mute ; a delicate, anxious fear,
When the fair object of his love was near,
Crept through his frame, and checked his bounding blood.
Oft when he chanced her sweet soft voice to hear,
In mute but awkward consciousness he stood,
Whilst to his burning cheeks rushed up the crimson flood.

XX.

He spoke not, but the flush upon his cheek
Was the true earnest of a smitten heart;
And though he dared not trust his tongue to speak,
His beaming eye did all he felt impart.
From the full fountain of his breast would start
The vital stream, and through his ardent frame
Spread, till his body glowed in every part;
And yet when his love's idol near him came,
His passion's fire was quenched—his very soul grew tame.⁵

XXI.

In nuptial schemes his idler hours were spent :
Long had he looked on Bertha with an eye
That told his secret, mutely eloquent ;
How would he heave the half-resisted sigh
When the fair object of his love was nigh !
But she regarded not the doting swain ;—
Yet when the dear tormentor passed him by,
He 'd gaze and blush, then gaze and blush again—
His looks met no return, his blushes burned in vain.

XXII.

Oft in his pregnant fancy would he rear
Fantastic fabrics in the smiling skies,
Till these bewitching visions would appear
With all the clearness of realities.
O'er his young brain the fond ideas rise,
Till the rapt spirit kindles as they glow :
Hope, pointing to the goal, displays the prize,
But disappointment, her insidious foe,
Shall snatch it from his grasp, and triumph at his woe.

XXIII.

What transport thus our eager thoughts to fling
Into the mighty void, and there to trace
Upon imagination's buoyant wing
Her bright creations, and to roll through space
Above yon burning suns, whose orbs embrace
Regions beyond the firmament—to soar,
And build, where we can find no resting-place,
Fancy's fair structures!—When she smiles no more,
Then welcome death, for this world's happiness is o'er.

XXIV.

Bertha, unconscious of her power to wring
Another's bosom, smiled whene'er she viewed
Her unsuccessful lover languishing ;
And oft, with banter kind and whisper shrewd,
His passion rallied ; still did there intrude
No thought of self upon her artless mind ;
She was too innocent to play the prude,
And deemed that Wallace had his heart resigned
To some Arcadian maid to whom that heart inclined.

XXV.

He let concealment, "like a worm i' th' bud,"
Prey on his sallow cheek, nor ever told
Whose charms had from it forced the mantling blood.
Silence and he grew social ; as he strolled
In mute abstraction o'er the neighbouring wold,
Hope less distinctly tantalized his view ;
But dazzling visions still before it rolled,
Beckoning capricious fancy to pursue—
When fear's gaunt image rose, and chased the phantom crew.

XXVI.

'Tis but a treacherous pleasure when we blind
Our feelings to a dread reality—
When o'er the quickly apprehensive mind
We cast delusion's veil, and from the eye
Of keen conviction diligently try
To hide the stubborn truth :—vain cozenage !
Sooner or later comes the certainty
Of all we dreaded ; when within us rage
Pangs that with double might against our peace engage.

XXVII.

Ah ! what a struggle now 'twixt hopes and fears
Disturbed his daily quiet ! As a stream
That's ruffled by the storm, no more appears
To bask and wanton in the solar beam ;
So he, awakened from love's halcyon dream,
Now revels in the light of joy no more :
To him alike all this world's prospects seem,
Although they had so sweetly smiled before ;
For love has wrenched his heart—its day of bliss is o'er.

XXVIII.

There was a secret monitor within
Which whispered comfort in the midst of pain;
Yet 'twas unheeded, for he could not win
His bosom's banished inmate back again.
He ne'er was heard, though wretched, to complain,
But sighed in silence, and in silence wept:
Grief, which there held an undisputed reign,
Ceased not her torments even when he slept,
But still by day and night a fixed possession kept.

XXIX.

As near the deep some solitary bird
Perched on the beetling cliff, with drooping wing,
Struck by the fowler's gun—its moans unheard—
The fretted waves beneath it bellowing,—
Regardless, as on high their foam they fling—
Its plumage ruffled, and relaxed its eye,—
Above, around, the fierce storm blustering
Breaks not its stern repose,—no refuge nigh,
It stands upon the bleak and barren rock to die.

XXX.

So Wallace, shunning each familiar face,
Stood, like the desert palm, alone and sad,
Whilst sorrow cankered in his breast apace.
No smile played round his lips—and if there had,
'Twould have belied him, though so lately glad,
And free from every care : the throbbing brow,
The o'erstrained heart-strings, almost drove him mad :
Death would indeed have been a blessing now,
But still the sufferer lived, and yet he recked not how.

XXXI.

Edgar perceived the struggles of his mind
'Twixt love and friendship,⁶ and, admiring, saw
That love, so often rash, and oftener blind,
Gained not the mastery o'er honour's law.
Though Wallace pined in secret, not a flaw
Of vicious thought had fretted on his heart :
In worldly cunning he was all too raw
To try the narrow subterfuge of art,
But met, with patient soul, affliction's bitter smart.

XXXII.

Bertha indeed was grieved to see the change
In one for whom she felt such high esteem :
All now was gloom and sorrow at the grange,
Where late the star of mirth diffused its beam.
She guessed not why he pined, nor could she deem
How rooted was his anguish ; from her eye
The warm and sparkling tear would often stream
When, with dejected mien, he passed her by,
Or shrunk from her approach, if he beheld her nigh.

XXXIII.

Within her, like the gentle parent dove
Upon her brood, the cherub pity lay ;
For there, when glow the hallowed fires of love,
All cognate feelings are as warm as they.
Upon his burning hand her palm she 'd lay,
And seek the secret of his grief to gain ;
But he turned from her on his silent way,
While the fierce anguish darted through his brain,
Until the tear found vent to soothe his maddening pain.

XXXIV.

His mother, anxious for her only boy,
Beheld with dread his mind's increasing gloom ;
Grief seized her soul, and blasted all her joy.
Before her tottering footsteps yawned the tomb,
Whose ever dark and solitary womb
She felt must shortly now enclose her dust.
Yet ere she should be called to that drear home,
Where rest alike the sinner and the just,
To see her child well wed had been her constant trust.

XXXV.

The very slaves were troubled at his woe,
And often thronged around him as he past,
With tearful eye and quivering lip, to know
Why anguish to his spirit clung so fast :
But e'en their fondness painful grew at last,
And their officious kindness teased him sore :
To his dull ear the mutterings of the blast,
Or the wild hurricane's impetuous roar,
Was sweeter melody, and soothed his sorrows more.

XXXVI.

He was at once a master and a friend
To these dark sons of Afric's scorching clime :
They were not forced beneath the yoke to bend
As if their slavery had been their crime.
Whatever clouds roll o'er the course of time,
There may be brightness in the dullest lot,
And—how the soul leaps at the thought sublime !—
Though happiness is not for this poor spot,
Yet bondsmen have their heaven, and kings may have it not.

XXXVII.

To Edgar now fair Bertha's hand was plighted.
Eumenes saw, nor disapproved to see,
That love's enduring links their hearts united :
From narrow pride as from ambition free,
Wealth, nor the pomps of lordly pedigree,
Could not bribe him to do his daughter wrong ;
Edgar he therefore fixed her mate should be,
And named the marriage day ; nor was it long
Before the tale went round the neighbouring serfs among.

XXXVIII.

Wallace had heard the final promise given,
And, as he heard, he raised his head and sighed :—
“May the consent be ratified in heaven!”
(His eyes o’ergushing with their load,) he cried.
To tear her image from his heart he tried,
Branded by love’s hot shaft;—in vain—for still
The tyrant god his niggard aid denied.
He left the cot heart-stricken, warped in will,
Whilst in his sluggish veins the lagging blood was chill.

XXXIX.

They who have loved, when not one tender sigh
Has e’er been echoed back, will keenly feel
For others who have wept, with fevered eye,
O’er a harsh fate which time can ne’er repeal,
Unless cold apathy the breast anneal
To a stern temper, like a polar frost.
Better the warm affections should congeal
At once to ice, than, when our love is crost,
Renounce the busy world, as all its joys were lost.

XL.

Edgar was sad to mark his early friend—
The kind companion of his infant years—
Thus withering ere his prime, and sought to blend
Amusement with his griefs; for he had fears
Lest the perpetual gush of sorrow's tears
At length should burst his heart—'twas all in vain !
For soothing was but discord to his ears,
And his soul seemed as if it courted pain,
Like the poor slave who, whilst it galls him, hugs his chain.

XLI.

Though to the same attraction either turned,
These early friends esteemed each other well :
Love's purest flame in both their bosoms burned,
Still friendship slept not there; nor once befell
Dispute or strife, her bland regards to quell.
The jaundiced eye of jealousy was closed,
For Wallace scorned to trust an imp so fell ;
And though his friend his brightest hopes opposed,
Yet envy from his eye no baleful light disclosed.

XLII.

Now that the fiat of his doom was sealed,
Within him disappointment's doleful chimes
Rung like a knell: to reason he appealed
In vain, which, howsoever it sublimed
The mind unstained by folly or by crimes,
Can ne'er restore the spirit's long-lost ease:
In spite of all its lessons, still, at times,
Grief on the disappointed heart will seize,
And with her icy gripe the kindest feelings freeze.

XLIII.

Her livid glow his faded cheeks o'erspread,
His frame grew every hour more weak and spare;
Within his stormy breast joy now was dead,
Whilst hideous phantoms mocked him everywhere;
Scarcely could his mind the constant conflict bear,
And on his brow the eye began to trace
Those lines which told how woe was working there.
His hair grew white and withered; not a grace
Of youth, of health, remained on that once sprightly face.

XLIV.

He shunned all social fellowship with men,
And to the silence of the woods withdrew,
Where through the thicket's maze, or pathless glen,
He could unchecked his sombre thoughts pursue.
He turned repulsive from the curious view
Of the lone traveller that passed him by;
Nor till his shoulders dripped with evening dew,
And the bright stars were twinkling in the sky,
Recked he of day's decline, or deemed that night was nigh.

XLV.

Not e'en a mother's converse now could please—
It fell discordant on the 'wildered ear;
For what can minister to a mind's disease
When all the buddings of the heart are sere,⁷
And hope's beguiling star has ceased to cheer?
That calm is found in solitude alone,
Where, unbeheld, may fall the soothing tear:
There could he breathe unheard his plaintive moan—
There give his sorrows vent, unheeded and unknown.

XLVI.

Grief is a selfish feeling ; unsubdued,
It stills each livelier impulse of the heart ;
'Tis nourished to excess in solitude,
And on self-torment lives and grows, apart
From all our sympathies : the wiles of art
May sometimes rouse the slumbering energies,
But Time alone can heal the bosom's smart ;
He marks the sorrower, as for peace he tries,
And, like a watchful nurse, the gradual cure supplies.

XLVII.

Yet are there some whom he can never heal.
There is a fixed intensity of care
Which mocks his mute but forcible appeal—
'Tis the deep sullen feeling of despair :
Oh ! how it clings around the heart, and there
Clogs all its finer springs, and tames the swell
Which rapture oft had raised, when, free as air,
The light blood bounded, and the sweet "all's well"
Chimed its mild music there to strengthen pleasure's spell !

XLVIII.

Try what we can, e'en friendship's soothings then
Fall dissonant upon the morbid ear :
Compassion's accents are a torture, when
The bright eye's springs are void, and not a tear
Streams at the call of grief: in sooth, to hear
Her muttered plaints excites no sympathy ;
But where, no murmur heard, her traits appear
Trenched deep upon the brow, 'tis then the sigh
Of pity swells the breast—her pearl begems the eye.

XLIX.

Poor Wallace drooped, and, like a goodly tree
Whose roots are cramped, now showed a swift decline.
He loathed his food, or tasted sparingly,
And his sunk eyes displayed a fearful sign
How deeply woe had worked her deadly mine.
His former liveliness was all subdued,
And of his features, harsh grew every line :
No more he showed his wonted hardihood,
For her deep taint had reached the channels of his blood.

L.

To him the sound of merriment was dire,
And others' joys but mocked his misery;
Checked was each keener impulse of desire
By the torpedo-touch of apathy.
His soul, o'erwrought by sensibility,
Sunk, jaded and oppressed with its own woes;
Nor from its dark impressions could it flee,
But seemed to court and linger on its throes,
As if his pains were joys, and he and joy were foes.

L.I.

Edgar the while was confident in hope :
All his were May-day moments, ne'er o'ercast
By fear's anticipations ; vast his scope
Of bliss prospective—bliss for earth too vast !
But when he saw, prostrated by the blast
Of wretchedness, his dearest, earliest friend,
All selfish feelings were at once o'erpast,
And from his livelier pleasures he'd unbend
To ease a breaking heart, beyond his power to mend.

LII.

For he remembers well the sportive hours
Which they had spent together in the morn—
The hale fresh morn of childhood, when the powers
Of mirth were in their vigour; when the horn⁹
Was echoed from the mountains, and the corn
Waved o'er the vallies; when their hearts were free
From cares—the lot of all of woman born,
Who plucked and eat of the forbidden tree,
Entailing thus guilt's curse on all her progeny.

LIII.

To glance the ripe thoughts back upon the past
Amid the bright scenes of our years, and there
To trace, when not a single cloud o'ercast
The clear star of our hopes—is pleasure rare,
And soothing to the spirit. To compare
What has been with what is—our young, fair days
With a still fairer manhood, and to share
The happiness of each ten thousand ways—
Imparts a double life, and swells our souls with praise.

LIV.

Alas ! to one how changed the sprightly scene !
That voice which late was harmony, is mute,
Or waked to discord ; now, no more serene
To him the prospect smiles ; the mellowing fruit
Of bliss, ere ripe, is nipt, and of the lute,
Once tuned to mirth, the melody is o'er ;
Within, the piercing throe is so acute,
That in his ear when pity's soothings pour,
Like caustic on a wound, they but inflame the more.

LV.

For the jarred mind, impatient of relief,
Spurns consolation—as a poison, spurns ;
And to the blighting luxury of grief,
Against her better counsel, madly turns.
Oft as with sorrow's feverish heat it burns,
It mocks medicaments, and courts disease ;
Within the dark recess of thought sojourns,
And drains the bowl of suffering to the lees,—
When on the harassed soul despair's harsh feelings seize.¹⁰

LVI.

While fed the love-lorn Wallace on his woes,
Edgar with Bertha passed each tranquil day :
Their cottage was the temple of repose,
And pleasure smiled their happy hours away.
The seraph joy on either bosom lay,
And, with unruffled pinion, settled there ;
But who, alas ! shall reckon on his stay !
Swift as a sunbeam—if assailed by care—
He takes his instant flight to seek repose elsewhere.

END OF CANTO III.

CANTO IV.

The darkened brow, where wounded pride
With ire and disappointment vied,
Seemed, by the torch's gloomly light,
Like the ill demon of the night,
Stooping his pinions' shadowy sway
Upon the nighted pilgrim's way :
But, unrequited love ! thy dart
Plunged deepest its envenomed smart,
While eyes, that mocked at tears before,
With bitter drops were running o'er.

Lady of the Lake.

CANTO THE FOURTH.

And say, without our hopes, without our fears,
Without the home that plighted love endears,
Without the smile from partial beauty won—
Oh ! what were man?—a world without a sun.

Pleasures of Hope.

I.

BEYOND the spreading wood that skirts the dell
Where lived Eumenes, dwelt a potent lord :
O'er his domain he reigned a tyrant fell,
And those he ruled, their rigid fate deplored ;
His will sole arbiter ; his plea, the sword.
In vice he held a bold supremacy,
By neither good nor evil men adored ;
All shunned the deathful terrors of his eye—
Lust was his only idol—guilt his deity.¹

II.

Life had no joys for him but when he doomed
Some heart to woe, relentless in his spite:
On his domain no virgin blossom bloomed—
Around it spread seduction's withering blight.
Above his battlements the bird of night
Croaked in hoarse murmurs ; his so fell a name
As never tongue could utter with delight :
Whene'er 'twas syllabled, the flush of shame
Upon the maiden cheek with quick suffusion came.

III.

The tenantry who owned him as their lord
Shrunk, with chill horror, from his looks of gloom :
The thunder rolled less awful than his word.
Less dreaded was the silence of the tomb
Than his stern silence : when he chanced to roam,
The astounded rustic shunned the tainted road :
Fear in his mansion made her constant home,
Yet trembling lurked in that accursed abode,
Where, on the wings of guilt, oppression madly rode.

IV.

There was a lurking devil in his eye,²
A curl upon his lip, and on his brow
A scowl that would not give his heart the lie.
He ne'er had deigned his haughty crest to bow
To God or man ; nor sought, nor cared he how
He gained his ends, if they but answered well.
Too long guilt's minion, he was callous now
Either to hope of heaven or fear of hell—
His soul was seared with crime, and vice had rung its knell.

V.

His brain a vortex, in whose ceaseless whirl
Tossed the tempestuous passions : as a wave
Dashing the strand, upon whose foamy curl
The young fry wreck—their cradle and their grave.
Dark were his thoughts, and turbulent ; a slave
To their wild workings, demon-like, he 'd brood
On deeds of death that would appal the brave ;
For he delighted in the taint of blood,
And e'er, o'er desperate men, their fierce arch-devil stood.

VI.

As the gaunt wolf, with rabid hunger grim,
Steals from his murky lair, at break of day,
Where, o'er the relics of some mangled limb,
He whetted fierce his fangs; now, armed to slay,
The timid wood-tribes flee before his way,
And echo wakens to his hideous howls:
So the fell chieftain, though in vice grown gray,
Skulks from his den of guilt, and, as he prowls,
His scared retainers flee, nor dare to meet his scowls.

VII.

His menials, doomed to do his fell behests,
Fawned when he frowned, and shuddered when he smiled:
Hate was the master-feeling of their breasts,
And though they bowed submissive when reviled,
And to their lot seemed meekly reconciled,
Still their hearts tugged against their chains; but fear
Enforced obedience, and, with aspect mild,
They did their tyrant's bidding:—far and near
Strange tales of guilt went round, nor shunned the public ear.

VIII.

A reckless despot, in his dark abode
Vice reigned in all her direst turpitude :
There daily her polluted cup o'erflowed
With secret venom, craftily imbued.
There oft amid the revel, coarse and rude—
When passion's rein was loose and mirth was high—
Scenes of such flushed corruption had ensued
As would the rigid voice of truth defy,—
For truth was here so black, it must have seemed a lie.

IX.

Rumour too quickly to his ear conveyed
The matchless charms of old Eumenes' child ;
He heard the praises of the unconscious maid,
And sudden schemes of ill his thoughts beguiled.
He saw her, though unseen,—and almost wild
With lawless love, determined her his prey ;
Yet for a while his fiendish arts were foiled :
For, be the villain cunning as he may,
He'll find the price of evil often hard to pay.

X.

Edgar had sought and won her ; and their tale
Of love, provoked the tyrant's savage mood ;
His sallow cheek at the report grew pale,
And rage to instant fever chafed his blood.
By all the pangs of jealousy pursued,
On Edgar's name he showered his curses down ;
Those hellish schemes of villany renewed
Which raised him up to infamous renown,—
While fiercer glared his eye, and darker grew his frown.

XI.

Such are the torments of the guilty ;³ they
Know not the blessings of the heart's repose :
Their very joys are curses, for they prey
On all that might relieve their bosom's woes,
When woes distract it :—there its poison throws
The blasting Upas, vice's baleful tree,
Upon whose boughs her deadly fruitage grows :
There frets the insatiate worm of misery—
That worm which never dies, but gnaws eternally.

XII.

The day of anxious hope, of anxious fear,
Which was to see the lovely Bertha wed,
Drew nigh : while trembled in her eye the tear,
And, by the fair but envious graces led,
To the hoar priest, on timid feet, she sped.
The holy churchman shrived her, ere that hour
Of solemn compact ; still, with fluttering dread,
She saw the day approach : the blushing flower
Grew pale upon her cheek, and fear proclaimed its power.

XIII.

There is in joy a frequent gush of pain,
For sorrow issues from the selfsame spring :¹
To seek enjoyment unalloyed, is vain—
The busy thoughts are ever on the wing
To torture with their own imagining.
Bertha, although she knew not why, was sad,
Nor could reflection its composure bring :
Her mind was pensive, though her heart was glad,
And certain secret fears her rising joys forbad.

XIV.

Edgar had no such fears; hope's radiant beam
Mildly reflected in his sparkling eye—
As the clear sunlight in the falling stream—
Endued it with its own pure brilliancy.
No care disturbed the calm complacency
In which his hours were passed—so cloudless shone
The present aspect of his destiny!
He was the same, companioned or alone,
For o'er his breast's repose no tempest-clouds were thrown.

XV.

The sun poured all his splendour on the day
Which brightly heralded the marriage morn:
All nature smiled beneath his orient ray;
The spreading blossom whitened on the thorn,
And waved with every breeze the mellowing corn.
Bertha went forth amid the peaceful scene,
When of his fiercer beams the sun was shorn:
'Twould have dispelled the cold ascetic's spleen,
To have beheld her form, and marked her heavenly mien.

XVI.

Beauty has in it what defies the pen,
And mocks imagination's boldest flight :
It tames the savage breasts of savage men,
And melts the harsher feelings to delight :⁵
A star amid misfortune's blackest night
Its cheering rays her sullen gloom dispel,
And make this world a heaven, in misery's spite :
Despair she snatches from his native hell,
And he revives to joy beneath her powerful spell.

XVII.

There is a music in her every tone,
A silent eloquence in every tear ;
In every glance a rapture ne'er unknown,
And every sigh that steals upon the ear
Sings comfort to the soul, and lulls its fear,
When 'tis the answering echo of its own.
How sweet the solace is of misery here,
When by our couch, to hush the rising groan,
Pale beauty sits to soothe where she can soothe alone !

XVIII.

Woman! although it is our lot to dwell
Amidst a world of vast variety,
Where plenty pours the treasures from her shell,—
Still what were all its blessings without thee!
Man in his strength, amid the troubled sea
Of time and circumstance, had singly stood
Like some bleak solitary rock, to be
Lashed by its storms, or buried in its flood—
Didst thou not buoy him up, thou sweetest earthly good!

XIX.

Along a streamlet's marge the maiden hied,
Which gently rippled through the neighbouring wood,
When she was met by haughty Akenside:
Before her unabashed the tyrant stood,
Nor by her blush, nor angry frown, subdued.
She caught the fixed expression of his eye,
Which in a moment chilled her mantling blood;
She gasped, she trembled, yet she scarce knew why,
Nor could the glance of scorn her maiden fears belie.

XX.

It was to him a stirring sight to see
How fairly heaven's own work was done in her.
As he, in all his guilt's deformity,
Stood by her, like apostate Lucifer,
She, like a lamp within the sepulchre,
Of all around her was the brightest thing :
Ne'er in her soul did one harsh passion stir ;
Whilst in his bosom envy's deadly sting
Was with fresh poisons charged, her guileless heart to wring.

XXI.

He shrunk not from the maiden's mute reproach,
But raised to hers his dark and flashing gaze :
She shuddered at his sudden rude approach,
And her heart throbbed 'twixt terror and amaze.
She could not meet his eye's unhallowed blaze,
And o'er her own the lids instinctive closed :
But when her drooping head she dared to raise,
Her progress he, with gentle force, opposed,
And smiled, as demons smile, while he his will disclosed.

XXII.

She sickened as his most pernicious breath
Poured its pollutions on her startled ear ;
His very words bore the hoarse tones of death—
His every look aroused a kindred fear.
There might be traced too well the lordly leer,
Which through the maiden's frame diffused a chill
Of cold disgust, and warned of danger near :
That eye too clearly told the heart's foul will,
And what that heart could dare its purpose to fulfil.

XXIII.

Ne'er had the pitying tear that orb bedewed,—
For others' woe ne'er heaved his breast the sigh ;
Trained to a life of senseless hardihood,
He scorned the melting thrills of sympathy.
His tongue had often coined the ready lie
For vicious ends—as sinister as bold :
He, though a niggard, ne'er refused to buy
Where virgin innocence was to be sold—
A very wolf, he sought the loveliest of the fold.

XXIV.

He had advanced the timid maid to greet,
And placed her burning palm within his own,
Offered to lay his riches at her feet,
And raise her near the level of a throne.
As he avowed his love in ardent tone,
His breast with fierce desire began to heave,
While shook the maiden like a bending crone.
She heard, but was too cautious to believe,
For rich men oft will swear, and swear but to deceive.

XXV.

“Accept my vows, fair maid,” the monster cried,
And pressed, with painful gripe, her trembling hand;
“Give me thy charms, consent to be my bride,
“And all that wealth can give, at thy command,
“Shall at thy feet be scattered: high I stand
“Amid the dignities of birth and name;
“Profusion casts her bounties o’er my land;
“And thou shalt grace the registry of fame,
“For I, through long descent, from lofty lineage came.

XXVI.

“ Slaves on their swarthy knees before me bow,
“ And gems of matchless price adorn my board;
“ To thee shall they devote their service now,
“ For thou—the choice and idol of their lord—
“ Honoured by them, by me shalt be adored.
“ List to my passion’s rapture, for my soul,
“ Fierce as a lion by the hunter gored,
“ Springs from the cold restrictions of controul,
“ And makes its eager way to pleasure’s rapturous goal.

XXVII.

“ Think not my love can any medium know,
“ Or chill philosophy allay its fires:
“ Enjoyment was designed for man below,
“ And love first rose to quicken our desires.
“ He who to Heaven’s beatitude aspires,
“ May have its foretaste oft from beauty’s lips,—
“ There is the heaven true wisdom most admires;
“ Man, like the bee that in the wild flower dips,
From woman’s sweeter charms, their heavenly fragrance sips.”

XXVIII.

“ Forbear,” with crimsoned cheek, the maid rejoined,
“ To urge a suit I never can approve :
“ I am another’s destined, plighted bride,
“ Nor would I lose a portion of his love
“ To gain Potosi’s treasures : did the dove
“ E’er mate her with the taloned bird of prey ?
“ Your language, lord, my feelings much reprove ;
“ And, take my final answer as you may,
“ I must reject your suit—’twere folly to gainsay.

XXIX.

“ Power, titles, honours, riches, I despise,—
“ And glory in my humbleness of lot ;
“ Ne’er shall I raise ambition’s longing eyes
“ Above yon lovely, yet sequestered cot.
“ To me the purling rill, the sylvan grot,
“ Than halls of state, have more transcendant charms :
“ I cherish the seclusion of that spot
“ Where oft, in infancy, a parent’s arms
“ Have held my baby form, and lushed my vain alarms.”

XXX.

The brows of Akenside lowered dark and dire,
And the blood bounded from his yellow skin,
Leaving the hollow visage blanched with ire.
There was no trait, the tender heart to win;
But the fixed, glaring character of sin.
The lips began to quiver, and his heart
To heave, with gathering rage, his breast within;
He raised his angry head, and turned apart,
While from his full, quick eye, the tears began to start.⁶

XXXI.

So we behold the surly mastiff turn
With half-discovered fang, when, from his jaws
Is plucked the ravished booty, and the spurn
Of angry foot, which the gaunt brute o'erawes,
Avenes well the theft. The chieftain draws
Nigher, though baffled, for a fresh essay;
His blood—with his whole sinful soul's applause—
Boils o'er, and wakes the passions in its way,
And he can scarcely keep those fiery foes at bay.

XXXII.

The wild emotion in his stormy breast
He felt was every moment rising higher ;
And to the maid once more himself addressed,
Curbing the eager workings of desire.
No eye could gaze on her, but must admire
Her modest dignity, her generous pride !
With wily art, he checked the kindling fire
Which angry disappointment had supplied,
And, in smooth tone, these further words replied.

XXXIII.

“ This is the idle sophistry of fools—
“ The heart of woman is ambition’s own :
“ Reject the pious cant of modern schools,
“ For falsehood’s seeds are there profusely sown,
“ There the thin bubble of deceit is blown.
“ Where lives the maid, of such unearthly mind,
“ Would spurn the splendid pageant of a throne ?
“ There’s no such phoenix ; virtue cannot find
“ On earth her counterpart—then be not still unkind.

XXXIV.

“ Mine is the love which bursts from passion’s spring,
“ Strong and impetuous, yet warm and true ;
“ Within this heart its roots are flourishing—
“ Reject not then the man who doats on you,
“ Who can no longer now that love subdue
“ Which has his circling blood to fever fanned :
“ My wants on earth, my wishes would be few,
“ Could I persuade thee to accept my hand,
“ And reign sole mistress o’er myself, my slaves, my land.

XXXV.

“ Who is this Edgar ? Can thy lofty soul
“ Exhale its essence on a thing so mean ?
“ Come, free it from this most debased controul,
“ And ’twill burst forth in renovated sheen,
“ Spurning that contact which has lately been
“ A blight, a poison to its purity.
“ Hast thou no woman’s pride ?—that eye serene
“ Gives to thy little fluttering heart, the lie ;
“ For who would honours scorn, that could so cheaply buy ?”

XXXVI.

“ Desist, I charge thee, lord, nor press me more,”
With energy the blushing Bertha cried ;
“ Still must I urge what I have urged before,
“ That Bertha ne’er can wed with Akenside :
“ To-morrow’s sun shall see her Edgar’s bride.
“ Love is not mine to give ; to yield my heart
“ Without, would be a sacrifice to pride
“ Which I have learned to scorn : the transient smart
“ Will not afflict thee long—be generous, and depart,

XXXVII.

“ Nor further seek my worthless love to gain,
“ ’Tis now beyond my giving ; strive not then,
“ By means unjust, to give another pain :
“ Honour’s the fairest guide of noble men,
“ And, once deserted, ne’er bestows again
“ Upon the renegade, her proud renown.
“ Nay, Lord, relax those brows, and deign to ken
“ That virtue scorns to tremble at a frown,
“ And still would spurn deceit, though blazoned in a crown.”

XXXVIII.

“ ’Tis well, rash girl,” the impatient chief rejoined,
While rage glared madly from his starting eyes,—
“ Since to thy interest thus thou darest be blind,
“ The hated minion of thy fondness dies :
“ O’er his expiring ashes shall arise
“ Revenge’s song of triumph ;—doting maid,
“ Repentance shall o’erwhelm thee : may the skies
“ Shower down their deadliest curses on my head,
“ If on yon hated drone my vengeance be not sped !

XXXIX.

“ Thou dost not know me, girl ; the fires of hell
“ Burn in my brain, and spread their horrors there.
“ My rage was never harmless where it fell :
“ Then mark me, senseless woman, and despair.
“ By all the powers of earth and heaven, I swear,
“ To blast his bud of promise, who has dared
“ To rouse the slumbering tiger from his lair !
“ Know, murder’s sanguinary arm is bared,
“ And from thy placid bosom peace shall soon be scared.”

XL.

He paused to breathe, and o'er his livid skin
The dark suffusion of his ire was spread;
That sanguine flush, which told of wrath within,
Deepened at length into the darkest red.
His frown grew harsh and deadly, from his head
Started the drops of anguish—fierce its throes—
The quick convulsion of his lip betrayed
A heart which rage had scared from its repose,
Whilst o'er his eye the hot lids pressed with frightful close.

XLI.

That brief, but awful pause, was horror's own :
And through the maiden's panting frame there stole
A pang, which forced the involuntary groan :
It feebly burst, nor could she then controul
That struggling ebullition of the soul.
Her parting lips, and vacant smile, betrayed
Her inward terror, whilst her eyes' quick roll
Declared her woman's weakness ; self-bewrayed,
Her vaunted firmness fled as she her foe surveyed.

XLII.

He gazed upon her still, and when he saw
How busy terror was within her breast,
The fangs of malice then began to gnaw,
And all the living devil stood confest.
A gleam passed o'er his features, which expressed
The triumph of his mute but bitter scorn;
His victim stood before him—how unblest!
With all that loveliness, of virtue born,
Could plead to pity,—but his heart was cankerworn.

XLIII.

She stood in speechless agony, yet he
Who caused it, felt no ruth; his busy brain
Was labouring still with some new villany.
He had no pleasure, but in others' pain—
E'en beauty's tears to move his heart were vain.
His broad chest heaving, and his glance of fire
Forbade appeal; a hardened, fierce disdain,
Shot forth amid the flashes of his ire,—
And mercy, withering, shrunk before that aspect dire.

XLIV.

Bertha was dumb, scarce flowed her curdling blood,
And her chilled bosom uttered not a sigh.
Thus oft the little glory of the wood
Before the cobra stands,⁷ his small bright eye
Gleaming with horror, as, with crest raised high,
The monster glares before him :—Bertha so—
Her pallid brow turned upward to the sky—
Faces her tyrant, whilst her mild eyes flow
With the mute pleadings of unutterable woe.

XLV.

Now from her presence forth the savage rushed—
His wild brain kindling with accursed intent ;
The tears of frenzy from his eye-lids gushed,
And to his frame a direr aspect lent.
Straight towards his home his hurried steps he bent,
And seizing there the fell machines of death,
Retraced his eager way ; and, as he went,
Anxiety and rage suppressed his breath,
Which struggled hard for vent, like his that maddeneth.

XLVI.

None know the tortures of a guilty soul,
But they whom guilt has branded as her own^s—
She offers them a sweet, but poisoned bowl.
They are encompassed by a fiery zone,
Which can be quenched by penitence alone;
But where this balm of healing never steals
Into the breast, the heart congeals to stone.
Thus Akenside no bland contrition feels,
But, like a wounded pard, 'neath his own fury reels.

XLVII.

Gnashing his jaws, and raging with desire
To mar the prospect of a rival's bliss,
Back he pursued his way; within, the fire
Of envy blazed, nor could he now dismiss
The torturing agony: he saw the kiss,
In fancy's mirror, play their lips around,
To whom he threatened scathe; a soul like his
Ne'er in the shackles of remorse was bound—
Revenge his hoarse trump blew, and he obeyed the sound.

XLVIII.

Bertha was staggered, as her anxious eye
Traeced his reeeding figure through the wood;
Her full veins throbbed, with terror's agony,
From the fierce menace of that man of blood.
In sad, but mute unconsciousness, she stood
As if the shock had paralyzed her sense,
Till thought propelling thought, the troubled flood
Dashed through her mind, with stormy turbulence,
Whilst her heart sickened at the dreaded consequence.

XLIX.

Could he dare play the murderer? The thought
Flashed like the lightning through her burning brain.
Could the fulfilment of revenge be bought
With nothing less than life? She gave the rein
To hope, and for a while it soothed her pain;
But soon on memory's re-awakened ear
The fierce infernal threatening burst again.
She breathed her Edgar's name,—he was not near
To shield the trembling maid, and soothe her anxious fear.

L.

Dejected now, in sad and silent mood,
While drear forebodings fretted sore within,
The maid her solitary way pursued,
Wooing capricious peace, but could not win :
Although her sufferings did but here begin,
The initiation chilled her very soul :
Anger had ceased to frown, if he had seen,
And vengeance dashed to earth the poisoned bowl ;—
But tyrant hearts are steeled 'gainst pity's bland controul.

LI.

What does this great and varied world present,
But a vast theatre of grief and crime !
Here vice is in her native element :
Throughout the peopled earth, in every clime,
Man preys on man, and, from the wings of time,
O'er the wide world flings mischief. He is here
The minister of his own woes ! The mime
Of virtue is played off, but her pure tear
Shines, like Golconda's gem, a treasure rare and dear.

LII.

When Bertha thought upon the past, her view
Was darkened o'er with what she feared might be :
Unsought forebodings from her terrors grew,
Whilst her charged breast, from dread no longer free,
Seemed nigh to bursting with its agony.
The tear stood sparkling in its crystal cell—
It fell not o'er the fringed extremity ;
Alarm had fixed it there, and, sooth to tell,
From her blanched lips no groan, no sigh, no murmur fell.

LIII.

How changed in one short hour, from bright to dark,
The aspect of her mortal destiny !
When the young morn sent up the tuneful lark
To pour his song of welcome to the sky,
Her heart was blythe as his ; no peril nigh
She deemed ; nor could have thought, alas ! how soon
Her pleasure would be changed to agony !
A storm indeed was gathering o'er her noon,
And happiness had now withdrawn its blessed boon.

LIV.

Shall her enjoyment then on earth be marred,
Her paradise be made a desert drear?
Where is the mortal yet, from woe debarred,
Who never shed affliction's blistering tear?—
When, at the great assize, there shall appear
The countless myriads of quick and dead,
'Twill be confirmed to all, how seldom here
The blessed balm of peace on man was shed—
How thickly o'er his path the thorns of woe were spread!

LV.

The bile to direful fermentation rose
Within the breast of Akenside, and gave
The final death-stroke to its stern repose.
Dark thoughts of blood, and visions of the grave
Flashed o'er his lurid fancy, while the rave
Of death, portentous smote his practised ear;
No manly visitings of nature, save
An inborn recklessness that mocked at fear,
Found to his soul their way—the worm of hell was here.

LVI.

His every thought was torture, and the streams
Of agony bedewed his burning brow.
His tongue was parched and swollen, and the fierce gleams
Of his large eye glared ghastly, like the glow
Of fires which in earth's entrails feed and grow.
Such even here the dread award of crime !
No more shall peace his bosom visit now ;
But darkly sailing down the stream of time,
His foul career must end in guilt's infernal clime.

LVII.

How short are all its triumphs !—for awhile
It may rejoice ; still must its debt be paid !
The time shall come when 'twill no longer smile,
But writhe in pangs eternal : though delayed,
The penalty is sure ; and when, arrayed
In all the gorgeous majesty of heaven,
The glories of the Judge shall be displayed,
How shall the man who ne'er with guilt hath striven,
Quail at the sight, while he despairs to be forgiven !

LVIII.

Bertha at length her father's cot regained,
And tremblingly her artless tale revealed;
From its spare source the scanty tear-drop drained,
And the warm currents of his blood congealed.
Long had he known the tyrant, but concealed
Such baneful knowledge from his daughter's ear;
Prudence his cautious lips had always sealed,
And he had ever shunned that man of fear
Like an infectious plague, lest peril should be near.

LIX.

Here was, in sooth, a melancholy scene !
The voice of mirth was still, and all was gloom
Where her pure pastimes had so lately been.
The buds of joy, now blighted in their bloom,
Lay drooping on the stem, and in their room
Grew the rank weeds of grief. The father here,
Whilst a forced smile his moistened eyes illumed,
From his fair daughter's cheek the big round tear
Kissed, as he vainly strove her anxious mind to cheer.

LX.

To calm her, every soothing art he tried,
But his own fears were quick, his hopes were dead.
He knew the ruthless soul of Akenside,
And now this knowledge filled his mind with dread :
More than one victim had already bled
'Neath that relentless arm, which never spared
The object of its vengeance ;—on his head
Ruin was sure to fall, and ill he fared
Who his ferocious might on equal chances dared.

LXI.

'Tis not the worst alone who suffer here,
Since good and evil are dispensed to all ;
For bad and good, throughout the varied year,
Spring's perfumes breathe—the rains of autumn fall.⁹
This world is but a scene of general thrall ;—
Here must we toil for the bright liberty
Of heaven, where no more evil can befall—
Where the warm tear is wiped from every eye—
Where bliss eternal reigns—where God is ever nigh.

LXII.

Mortal! whate'er thy griefs, on Him repose
Thy trust, who can alone those griefs allay;
Who can alike augment or ease thy woes,
And sfrew the sweets of comfort o'er thy way.
All have been, and all must be, sorrow's prey,
Who still this earth are treading, or have trod;
But trust in heaven, its heaviest strokes will stay.
Should stern misfortune smite thee, kiss the rod—
Man is indeed the victim; but the chastener, God.

END OF CANTO IV.

CANTO V.

Nay, droop not: being is not breath;
'Tis fate that friends must part,
But God will bless, in life, in death,
The noble soul, the gentle heart.
So deeds be just and words be true,
We need not shrink from Nature's rule;
The tomb, so dark to mortal view,
Is heaven's own blessed vestibule.

*From the Spanish of Luis Baylon,
translated by J. G. Lockhart.*

CANTO THE FIFTH.

Curæ leves loquantur, ingentes stupent.
Seneca.

I.

REVENGE was burning still ;¹ with eager stride,
Scorched by its fires, the chief pursued his way ;
By his fell agents watched, the homicide
Knew where was to be found his destined prey.
Thither, while passion's imps his heart o'erlay,
He sought the hapless Edgar, with a vow
To force him to his purpose, or to slay.
Big drops of anguish started from his brow,
And, a mere living curse, he paced the forest now.

II.

Reclining at his length upon the ground,
Lulled by the gentle murmur of the stream,
The man of blood his fearless victim found
Wholly absorbed in love's delicious dream.
Screened by a thicket from the solar beam,
He was unconscious that a foe drew nigh;
O'er him suspicion cast no doubtful gleam,
For, ripened into full security,
His future views were bright as his own native sky.

III.

The sight of Edgar on the sward reclining
Roused all the demon in his rival's breast,
And stirred up feelings there that mocked defining,—
That scared the brood of quiet from their rest.
Dead was the dove of peace upon her nest,
And passion's vulture preyed upon the corse—
When that has perished, who may dare be blest!
Stilled was each warning whisper of remorse,
And thus to Edgar's ear the savage made discourse.

IV.

“ Audacious boy ! who dost presume to stand,
“ With bold pretence, betwixt my love and me,
“ Prepare to yield me Bertha’s plighted hand ;
“ Or by that power which formed both her and thee,
“ This arm shall consummate thy fate’s decree.
“ Provoke not then, for ’tis in vain, the might
“ Of one whose fierce revenge, but once set free,
“ Thy soul to other realms shall wing its flight
“ Before yon gorgeous sun withdraw from earth his light.

V.

“ Be warned ! if still thou darest mine ire to move,
“ Thy life shall pay the forfeit of the deed :
“ To covet her whom I have deigned to love,
“ Demands my vengeance—mark me ! he shall bleed,
“ Who strives my nobler love to supersede.
“ But if thou wilt acknowledge thy consent
“ That Bertha from her vows to thee be freed,
“ The injured Akenside may then relent,
“ And make thee, for thy loss, a fair equivalent.

VI.

“All that my scope of fortune can procure
“Shall to thy wants be ever freely given :
“Thy happiness on earth will then be sure,
“Nor needst thou further go in quest of heaven.
“Speak thou whom folly has to rashness driven,
“Is it thy wish that we be friends or foes?
“Oppose not one whose heart, by passion riven,
“Would with the very fiends in conflict close,
“Did they, to work him bale, that passion’s force oppose.”

VII.

With arms compressing now his heaving breast,
And look of deadly hate, that did unfold
A most infernal meaning—’twas a test
Of fiendish purpose not to be controlled—
He breathed defiance, and, with bearing bold,
Upon his rival glanced a scornful eye :
That rapid glance a scheme of murder told,
Where search was made in vain for sympathy ;
But Edgar met its scowl, and made this prompt reply :—

VIII.

“ Foes, braggart, may we never cease to be
“ Till death our bodies from our souls divide :
“ From terror's shackles is my mind too free
“ To fear the coward threats of Akenside.
“ Bertha, in spite of him, shall be the bride
“ Of one, full ready to maintain his right :
“ Too firmly, Lord, is Edgar's soul allied
“ To truth and honour, to withhold his might
“ When eraven vaunts grow loud, and dare him to the fight. *

IX.

“ Take, for thy proffered friendship, back my scorn,
“ Nor think I heed thy threats or dread thy power.
“ Go to thy slaves, from shrieking mothers torn,
“ And lashed for thy base pastime ;—go and lower
“ On those who at thy frowns must vilely cower,
“ Or feel the galling thong. Shall Edgar yield
“ Unto thy robber hand love's loveliest flower ?
“ No ! while this arm in its defence can wield
“ Weapon of war, this rightful arm shall be its shield.

X.

He sprang upon his feet, and eyed the chief
With an expression of unmixed disdain.
The time for recollection now was brief,
For his revengeful purpose was too plain :
Fierce anger dashed through Edgar's breast amain
As he regarded his insulting foe ;
And while that foe, yet writhing in his pain,
Was brooding, ghoul-like, o'er the coming woe—
Still did he in his teeth the bold defiance throw.

XI.

Upon the chieftain's quivering lip there rose
The curl of scorn, revenge's livid hue :
His fevered eyelids dropped, with rapid close,
O'er the full orb of deep and piercing blue.
He could no longer now that pang subdue,
Which, like a whirlwind, swept his reeling brain.
Through him the ignited spark of vengeance flew,
And life's warm currents through each swelling vein
Danced with tempestuous rage, but rage suppressed his pain.

XII.

His tawny cheek grew deadly, for the gush
Of fevered blood pressed back upon the heart,
Where now it boiled, until, with sudden rush,
The bubbling current bounded from the part
Which gave it life and energy. The start
To boisterous undulation swelled his breast :
From his strained eye such angry flashes dart
As scare the timid bosom from its rest,
And wake to fearful thoughts which may not be expressed.

XIII.

While fury did in either breast ferment,
And each with weapon of destruction armed,²
To a near spot of level turf they went
Which old Eumenes and his daughter farmed.
No qualms of terror Edgar's soul alarmed,
But the stern purpose fired his steady eye,
Which—for unwonted ire his spirit warmed—
Was lighted with determined energy,
That spoke a firm resolve to vanquish or to die.

XIV.

A gloomy cloud hung o'er each adverse brow,
And each the other eyed with fierce disdain :
No further words escaped their lips, and now,
Sullen and mute, they reach the fatal plain.
The centre soon, with hurried steps, they gain,
And the brief distance pace with eager stride ;
Now ready for the fray they both remain,
Eight steps between, and, standing side to side,
At one accursed discharge the bloody strife decide.

XV.

The aim of Edgar missed—his wily foe
With surer hand the fatal trigger drew ;
Loud burst the deadly harbinger of woe,
And, winged with fate, the rapid bullet flew,
Piercing the honest heart of Edgar through.
Prone on the earth he fell, no more to rise,
Whilst o'er his features stole death's pallid hue ;
A gathering mist o'erspread his closing eyes,
And the quick gasp proclaimed his inward agonies.

XVI.

“Bertha, farewell! here death his blossom nips
“Who loved thee more than life,” he softly sighed;
The sound still murmured on his trembling lips,
When his eye met the frown of Akenside.
Dimly he saw the monster’s smile deride
His melancholy plight, and felt it sore :
With effort vain to gain his feet he tried,
But with his struggles welled afresh the gore—
Life’s fading spark expired—he looked—he breathed no more.

XVII.

“Fool!” cried the scoffer,—“fool! thou hast thy meed!
“Where now thy scorn, insulter? lie thou there—
“’Tis my soul’s banquet to behold thee bleed.
“Where was thy prudence, this bold arm to dare,
“Which ne’er was known a willing foe to spare
“That braved its prowess? Thou art not the first
“Whom it has sent—to me no matter where—
“But hear it, heaven!—may yet thy soul be curst,
“For I detest thee still, though death has done his worst.”

XVIII.

The sapling oak his hardy stem uprears,
And braves the direst horrors of the storm ;
Each fierce extreme of heat and cold he bears,
And, though the frost of winter may deform
His young and lusty arms, yet, kindly warm,
The summer calls new beauties forth to view :—
But, levelled by the woodman's sinewy arm,
His verdant honours now the earth o'erstrew,
Nor shall the vigorous spring those honours e'er renew.

XIX.

So perished Edgar,—so at length he fell
In the full pride of beauty and of youth :
His murderer gave him curses for his knell,
And as he gazed upon that brow, in sooth
From which death could not strike the lines of truth,
His eyes were lit with triumph's fearful glare ;
But, though he recked not, conscience has no ruth,
Nor ever will the guilty bosom spare,
For who can still remorse—the worm that riots there ?

XX.

The work of death was done; yet vengeance still,
Like a starved jackal, gloated o'er the dead,
And on the feast of slaughter gorged her fill:
But the same wreath that binds the victor's head
Shall leave its thorns upon his sleepless bed.
How will he shudder at this deed of blood
When busy memory stirs, and hideous dread
Fires the bewildered brain!—the withered bud
Of peace shall rot within, and taint life's turbid flood.

XXI.

The hour must come when guilt shall have its due,
And curse its prompt activity in crime:
Then shall the criminal in anguish rue
His foul misdeeds, and, at the doom of time,
With outcast spirits swell the wailing chime.
Short is the triumph here—the time shall be
When virtue, glittering in her glory's prime,
Shall trample on the neck of vice, and see
Just retribution overtake impiety.

XXII.

Like those fair fruits upon the deadly shore
Of that dark sea, where Jordan rolls his tides,³
Whose bright external promises a store
Of fragrance, while within them there abides
Ashes—man's element—and ill betides
The wretch who plucks and eats;—so, specious vice
Presents her blooming fruitage, but it hides
Curses within the core : like polar ice
Its juices chill the soul, and mar its paradise.

XXIII.

Upon the gory plain the murderer stood,
While gathered round his curling lips the smile
That told his relish of the feast of blood
On which his heart now glutted : foully vile,
As the kite hovers o'er a funeral pile,
He stood, and drank his fill of deadly glee ;
Within his stung and bitter breast the while
The passions warred, and struggled to be free—
And all within him now was one wild anarchy.

XXIV.

Upon his brain enrapturing visions rise
Of love, the sweetest guerdon of success.
On the cold sward that hated rival lies
Whom now fair Bertha's hand could never bless.
His upturned lips the horrid joy express
Which his dark thoughts o'erpassed, and for the while
He madly gloried in its proud excess.
On his swarth features plays the withering smile,
Which in his angry gall repels the rising bile.

XXV.

Bertha, while anxious hopes and fears rose high
Within her, heard at length the deathful sound :
Dread in her step and terror in her eye,
She gained, with frantic speed, the fatal ground.
The blood still trickled from the gaping wound
In Edgar's bosom ; to his aid she rushed
To staunch the gore that dyed his garments round.
Upon his breast the curdling crimson blushed,
And on his faded lips the last long sigh was hushed.

XXVI.

The maid, with trembling hand, unclosed his vest,
The palpitations of his heart to try;
She placed her burning palm upon his breast,
But life had passed its narrow boundary.
She threw a glance of silent agony
Upon those lineaments where lately played
The smiles of joy and love : her frenzied cry
He heard not now—" I 'll follow thee ! " she said,
And with emotion wild embraced the unconscious dead.

XXVII.

Thus the pale snow-drop on the frosted plain
Bows its fair crest beneath the wintry blast;
The vernal shower shall fall henceforth in vain—
A fatal blight has nipped its roots at last,
And all its beauty shall be soon o'erpast.
So Bertha drooped; aside her locks she flung,
And gazed upon the form before her cast,—
Now o'er the lifeless clay despairing hung,
And poured these piteous accents wildly from her tongue :

XXVIII.

“ My Edgar ! yes—I hear thy seraph voice
“ That summons me to meet thy soul above,
“ Where kindred spirits mingle, and rejoice
“ Before the presence of eternal love.
“ How will yon man of blood hereafter prove
“ His innocence, when heaven demands his plea !
“ Guilt shall his forfeit spirit then remove
“ Into that penal gulf, where, never free,
“ The damned endure their chains—the meed of infamy.

XXIX.

“ Aye, thou shalt one day shudder at thy crimes,”
Turning to Akenside, she wildly said.
“ Send thy name blacker down to future times,
“ And number Bertha also with the dead.
“ In thee the sight of death begets no dread ;
“ Make then the record of thy crimes complete—
“ Direct a bullet through this weaker head,
“ And spurn my reeking corse beneath thy feet,
“ For to thy monstrous palate human blood is sweet.”

XXX.

Unmoved he listened to the frantic tone,
Still unrelaxed his brow and fierce his eye ;
The rack-torn sufferer had forgot his own,
Had he beheld her mightier agony.
She gasped—her wild gaze fixed upon the sky—
And sobs of anguish choked her labouring breath :
In her throat rattled the convulsive cry,
While to her skin rushed up the taint of death—
Let those conceive her pangs whom sorrow maddeneth.

XXXI.

The stubborn cord of grief was strained too high—
It snapped, and Bertha bowed her head and died.⁴
When from her breast escaped the long-drawn sigh,
It roused the unfeeling soul of Akenside.
With frown relaxed the lovely corpse he eyed,
And his heart's adamant began to melt :
Pity its native sternness now defied,
And, spite his cruelty, for once he felt
His rigid pride bewrayed, his shock of sorrow dealt.

XXXII.

There is a moment to the guilty one
When each fell passion startles from its rest,
And leaves to contemplation's eye alone
The dark and troubled spirit of the breast.
There is a moment to the dire unblest
When all the potent energies of ill
Shrink palsied back from sin's accursed behest—
When all her imps are mute, against their will,
And through the hardened frame is felt the softening thrill.

XXXIII.

Picture the sinner in that gloomy hour
When sleep, a banished guest, deserts his bed,—
When dreams, like phantoms of infernal power,
Usurp his waking thoughts,⁵ and o'er his head
Roll the big drops of horror, as the dread
Of retribution through his wrung frame creeps.
Where is the man whose bosom never bled
When stung by keen remorse—that never sleeps,
But o'er the vicious soul her constant vigil keeps?

XXXIV.

Absorbed in reverie the murderer stood,
Pondering the niggard harvest of his crime ;
Along his veins danced the tumultuous blood
As memory rung within its dismal chime.
Guilt had now passed with him beyond the prime,
And calm reflection opened on his brain
That world which lies beyond the course of time.
He felt the sudden lash of inward pain,
But pride soon stilled the throe, and roused his high disdain.

XXXV.

Fond mortal ! will thy pride avail thee when
Man's universal creditor appears
To claim his bond ? Alas ! no refuge then
Will ope before thee in this vale of tears !—
What will be his forebodings when he hears
The last dread summons ! Terror's phantom crew
Will howl their frightful discord in his ears :
Hope's star will set upon his fading view,
And as his soul escapes, despair will e'er pursue.

XXXVI.

Remorseless still, like a bleak, blasted rock
Frowning amid the desert, stood the chief:
It seemed as if the rending earthquake's shock
Alone could move him; not a sign of grief
Relaxed his marble lineaments; but brief
His exultation! At his final hour
Where will his festered conscience seek relief?
Before the great arch-leveller must cower
The strong—the pride of valour, and the pomp of power.

XXXVII.

The father waited for his child till near
The western main the sun began to glide;
Then patience sickened, and foreboding fear
A burning flush, a quicker pulse supplied.
To the sad scene of death at length he hied,
Where, like grim Satan, lowering o'er his prey,
He met the deadly frown of Akenside;
And rushing where the breathless lovers lay,
To the fierce bursts of woe gave unresisted way:—

XXXVIII.

“ The hour of retribution must be nigh
“ When deeds of darkness thus appal mankind,—
“ When death’s fell engine, steeped in murder’s dye,
“ Loads with its victim’s groans the passing wind !
“ Ye friendly lightnings, flash and strike me blind,
“ That I may view no more this piteous sight !
“ My brain is bursting, darkness clouds my mind,
“ My senses reel, my day is turned to night ;—
“ Avaunt, thou man of blood ! thou devil’s proselyte ! .

XXXIX.

“ Hast thou not killed my daughter, slain my son,
“ And stirred woe’s poisons in my draught of joy ?
“ Pause ere thy mad career of guilt be run,
“ And on thy soul thy remnant hours employ.
“ Vice with thy blood has mixed its worst alloy,
“ And stamped thee demon in his direst form :
“ Thy worst is done—thou canst no more annoy ;—
“ Knit not those brows, I dread no further storm,
I ’m past the power of ill, and smile at threatened harm.

XL.

“ Oh ! how the sinning of my early years
“ Is punished now ! May the Lord’s will be done !
“ ’Tis just that I should expiate in tears
“ A crime, whose deep and damning taint has run
“ Through my whole track of life ; but still its sun
“ Was clear and bright above me, till the stroke,
“ Dealt by yon murderer, has my peace undone :
“ From its long dream I have at length awoke—
“ On me a curse has fallen—the spell of hope is broke.”

XLI.

Here ceased the wretched sire ; but to his cry
The ruthless man of slaughter gave no heed :
The unrelaxed expression of his eye
Told how his haughty mind approved the deed.
Vainly to one might heavenly pity plead
Whose heart was closed against her soft appeal ;
It had been now far too long seared to bleed,
And, like—in truth, too like—the tempered steel,
It could inflict a wound itself could never feel.

XLII.

Was this thy triumph, homicide? Alas!
It is the triumph of a guilty soul,
By which 'twill only the more surely pass
To the long horrors of that fiery goal
At which its course must terminate; the whole
Of a long life were time too short to close
The scars of guilt which sear thee o'er; her bowl
Has been too deeply quaffed to 'scape the throes
Which must thy spirit rack, if cast from heaven's repose.

XLIII.

To Wallace did the tale of terror run,
Who on the wings of vengeance reached the ground
Where murder his appalling work had done.
He gazed distracted on the gaping wound,
Where now the livid gore had curdled round;—
That form was blanched in death, in the glazed eye
There was no lustre of expression found.
His pale cheek glowed—his lagging pulse grew high,
And his hot breath escaped in many a groaning sigh.

XLIV.

There lay the lifeless body, stiff and cold,
Of one whom he had loved in early days,
When the young bosom was of plastic mould,
And love and nature followed the same ways.
Awakened memory to his mind conveys
All the delightful scenes of former years;
And as o'er by-gone hours remembrance strays,
The moan breaks forth; for all that life endears
Had passed, and ceased to flow the fountain of his tears.

XLV.

But horror had a mightier shock to deal!
Lo, where in mute astonishment he stands,
His eyes fixed wildly; then with maddening reel
He rushes to the object! Now his hands
Clasp the cold form; no more a soul expands
That still fair clay—long loved, though loved in vain!
Now starts the tear—a shower o'er desert sands—
To mitigate the rising throes of pain,
And on the crimson pasture falls like winter rain.

XLVI.

Still was she beautiful in death; a smile
Is on her lips, and on her cheek a hue
Of moonlight loveliness, as if, the while,
You could behold her spotless spirit through.
Around the living frame that spirit drew
A halo from its own pure essence, where,
The clime so kindred, heaven's own virtues grew.
Fair in her life, in death she was as fair—
Now 'mid yon skies a star to shine for ever there.

XLVII.

Oh! what a sight for one whose bosom still
Felt all that could be felt of tenderness,
In which yet unforgotten feelings thrill,
Though hope was banished from its drear recess.
The dregs of grief, in all their bitterness,
Were here stirred up anew, and every vein
Swelled with the tortures of his keen distress;
Past recollections rushed upon his brain,
And harrowed up his soul with deep and maddening pain.

XLVIII.

Long had the swell of passion calmed, but still
The root of love lay buried deep within :
Time had to disappointment warped the will,
And kept rebellious nature free from sin.
But when the scene where murder's work had been,
Burst on his sight, the thought of happier days
Passed quickly o'er his aching mind, wherein
The sad and various parts misfortune plays
Are pictured, darkly true, 'mid life's bewildering maze.

XLIX.

Aye, he remembers well that jocund time
When not a care disturbed him,—when the day
Was cloudless, in his childhood's buoyant prime,
And happiness diffused its brightest ray :
But those fair moments long have passed away,
While to his view woe's gloomy phantoms rise ;
They were too sullen for such joys to stay—
Those joys have sped to worlds beyond the skies,
Where they shall ever bloom in heaven's own paradise.

L.

He that loves truly once must love for ever,⁶
At least till death shall end his earthly race;
Disease may cramp the soul, the body shiver,
But, 'mid the wreck, there still remains a trace
Upon the heart, and which the hurried pace
Of time shall ne'er wear out, while the mind's eye
Can all the actions of the past embrace.
Pure love, once fixed within, can never die,
But, where its fixes, clings—its nurse the memory.

LI.

Alas! to love where loving nought endears—
To yield the heart's best tribute unrequited—
To wither in the very prime of years,
With all our hopes and all our wishes blighted—
This is indeed to suffer; to be slighted
By one whom the soul doats on, and to roam,
Like a poor wanderer through the world, benighted,
Unpitied and unmourned:—love finds a home
Within the bosom still, its birthplace and its tomb.

LII.

At length the lifeless bodies were conveyed
To the lone cottage, where their infant years
Had passed in innocence, and there arrayed
In death's dull pageantry : the honest tears
Of humble clowns were dropped upon their biers,
And their bones rested in one common grave.
They were not greeted by those scornful sneers
Which hail the tyrant great, the ignobly brave—
Love o'er their ashes wept, and joined the burial stave.

LIII.

To follow to the dark and silent tomb
The mute remains of all we loved on earth,
Is a most fearful duty ! when the womb
Of the dank grave shuts o'er them, and the dearth
Of tears—to which fierce grief refuses birth—
Is like a burning drought upon the heart.
When the gaunt sexton, with a song of mirth,
Piles the damp clay, how does the life's blood start
Through the distending veins, and burn in every part !

LIV.

Death ! what a harsh arbitrament is thine !
Alike on all, thy murky shades descend,
And all the glorious works of heaven combine
To ratify those powers, which often rend
Nature's capacious womb ! How oft the end
Of life by thy chill breath is "sicklied o'er !"
Why not, when summoned, visit like a friend ?
Strike not with anger stern, with torment sore,
And shock the struggling soul with wild alarms no more.

LV.

Death is a fearful sight ! the great and good
Oft look upon him with an awful dread.
Howe'er sin's evils may have been withstood,
There is a something o'er his aspect spread
That hangs a load upon the soul, like lead,
And weighs the spirit down ; it is a fear
Which nature can't expel—our hearts are wed
To the strong impulse : but it ceases here—
Death wafts us to those realms, where he shall ne'er appear.

LVI.

Stupendous thought! that when exhausted time
No more shall bear us on his eager wings—
No more the body brave this noxious clime
To which the sensual spirit only clings ;
Then the pure soul to brighter regions springs,
And, where the fountains of eternal light
Gush in accordance with celestial strings,
Shall freely quaff, in God's approving sight,
The exhaustless streams of bliss with sateless appetite.

LVII.

Who then would miss the heavenly paradise,
Where, 'mid the fount of everlasting day,
Blooms life's perennial tree, whose fruits suffice
To fill with fragrant bliss the ethereal way,
Plucked by seraphic hands? Then why delay,
Rash mortal, to prepare thy spirit's flight
For those unearthly realms? Why lingering stay
'Neath vice's scorching sun? A horrid night
Will o'er its setting close, its rise however bright.

LVIII.

When Wallace had beheld the unconscious clay
At length to its sepulchral home consigned,
To guilt's abode he bent his eager way,
Big with the purpose of a manly mind.
Though Bertha to his love had proved unkind,
Her dear remembrance in his heart was cherished :—
That love, whose treacherous joys he had resigned,
Although neglected long, still wildly flourished
As vines, which fuller grow the less by culture nourished.

LIX.

He found the tyrant lowering, dark and grim,
Like the hyena o'er the dead man's grave,
And nigh advancing, thus accosted him :
“ Behold me here—no base and crouching slave,
“ But the weak champion of the murdered brave,
“ And armed for vengeance : vantageless I stand
“ To dare in mortal strife the recreant knave
“ Still foul with murder : by thy guilty hand
“ To fall, or, conquering thee, purge this polluted land.”

LX.

The chieftain's eyes flashed fire, his lips grew pale,
And the big veins upon his wrinkled brow
Swelled nigh to bursting: like a turgid whale,
Wounded by some huge vessel's pointed prow,
And floundering from the torment of the blow,
He rolled in agony, while to his cheek
The crimson current rushed with fiery glow.
He now prepared a new revenge to seek,
And on another's head his desperate wrath to wreak.

LXI.

"Take then thy guerdon, madman," he replied,
"And if thou 'rt asked who sent thy soul to hell,
"Say 'twas thy reckless murderer Akenside,
"Who never failed to feed the devil well
"When lowly drones against him dared rebel.
"Your life has reached its term, and, whilst you may,
"Count o'er your beads, your pater-nosters tell.
"Ne'er shall those eyes behold again the day,
"For death has marked thee now, and here demands his prey."

LXII.

This said, he drew his weapon from its sheath,
And rushed on Wallace, foaming in his ire :
The wary champion shunned the menaced death,
And back, with cautious footsteps, did retire,
Parrying the adverse weapon, till the fire
Of rage fatigue had slaked ; then, marking well
The vengeful foe, as he began to tire,
Plunged in his breast the blade ;—with sudden yell
The tyrant met his fate—then staggered, groaned, and fell.

LXIII.

From his swarth brow the glowing crimson rushed—
His closing eye the fiery lustre fled :
Through his gored breast the ruddy torrent gushed,
And on his bosom sunk the drooping head.
A pale unearthly hue succeeds the red
Upon his ghastly lips—an ashy white !
The fierce convulsive gasp at length betrayed
The struggles of his soul for its last flight
To the Cimmerian realms of everlasting night.

LXIV.

“ Fiends claim their own,” in hurried tone he cried,
“ And curses on the chance that forced the claim !
“ Had not my arm its wonted skill denied,
“ Thy slavish heart had not escaped its aim.
“ Could I but see thy life’s blood gush the same
“ As mine now gushes from its ebbing spring,
“ Gladly my soul would go—to whence it came ;
“ For the worst pang the thought of death can bring
“ Is, that I leave on earth my victor triumphing.

LXV.

“ Nay, come not nigh me,—’tis a curse to die
“ When those we loathe behold the expiring throe ;
“ What is the body’s simple agony
“ To what the mind ’s then doomed to undergo !
“ My rack of feeling none but those can know
“ Whom vice has hardened in her baleful creed :
“ To what strange rest my spirit now may go,
“ I know not—but could I behold thee bleed—”
Death stopped his further speech, and the foul spirit freed.^s

LXVI.

Thus died the homicide, whose little span
Had been one scene of infamy and crime.
No friendly tear deplored the wretched man—
His soul no more floats on the stream of time,
But wanders in eternity—my rhyme
Cannot pursue him there; yet while his corse
Did with its tainted gore the earth begrime,
The general song of triumph, loud and hoarse,
Burst from unnumbered throats, and burst without remorse.

LXVII.

There were rejoicings then from every tongue,
Both slave and free, within his wide domain;
No eye was moistened, and no heart was wrung,
When it was bruited that their lord was slain.
The hardy caffer, as he shook his chain,
Sent up his shouts of gladness to the skies;
Hope seemed to brighten o'er his soul again,
And the warm transport gathered in his eyes,
As from their new-oped source her lovely visions rise.

LXVIII.

Wallace withdrew, and left the reeking clay
Without one sigh of pity for its fate.
Those halls which erst with revelry were gay,
By man deserted, soon grew desolate.
Within those halls did vampyres congregate,
Where once a Raphael's noblest efforts hung;
There on its lonely throne dumb ruin sate,
And o'er the crumbling pile its mischiefs flung—
There after-crimes had birth which must remain unsung.

LXIX.

Eumenes lived, but from his fevered brain
The bright and vivid ray of mind withdrew;
Neglect now held her empire o'er the plain
Where once the lovely stores of Flora grew:
There the rude blast of desolation blew,
And on the cottage croaked the bird of death;
The night-shade, meet companion to the yew,
Spread its obnoxious foliage o'er the heath,
Where fragrant blooms had blown, and shed their balmy breath.

LXX.

The valley's pride is gone, the mountain flower,
Nipped by the blast, has withered in its prime :
Virtue and beauty perished in that hour
Which hurried Bertha from this world of crime.
Now, brighter than the sun, in that pure clime
Where seraphs hail her 'mid their glorious throng,
She dwells, removed beyond the power of time :
There round God's throne, his glorying saints among,
Joining the heavenly choir, she pours the eternal song.

LXXI.

Wallace, whose force of grief was unsubdued,
Assumed the monkish cassock and the cowl ;
Still love possessed his heart, but with his blood
Disease fast mingled: when the midnight owl
Screeched to the moon, and, with discordant howl,
Roamed forth the beast of prey, he'd rise from sleep
And lash his sides in penance, till the growl
Of pain suppress from his parched lips would leap,
For in his cankered breast the sting of woe was deep.

LXXII.

He cast himself within the cloister's gloom
A blighted, solitary thing, to die
Unknown and unlamented: what a doom
For one still fresh in years! the hollow eye,
The pale, sunk cheek, the forehead's sallow dye,
The tottering gait, the frail and withered limb,
Proclaim what has been the soul's agony.
How sad a change had sorrow wrought in him,
Whose frame no weakness knew, ere pleasure's light was dim.

LXXIII.

Over a time-worn missal would he pore,
Till at his window hummed the early bee,
And count, with untired labour, o'er and o'er
The numbered circles of his rosary.
He shrunk from every sound of social glee,
And from all earthly cares detached his mind;—
Upon his visions dawned eternity,
On whose untracked expanse he hoped to find
Joys that shall much o'erweigh the sorrows left behind.

LXXIV.

Wrapt in the sullen silence of his cell,
Where the black spider spun his filmy pall,—
Its frightful gloom all but a type of hell,—
He wrenched his thoughts from this terrestrial ball,
To which they still would cling, as if in thrall
To some resistless agency : no light
Of comfort burst upon his darkness ; all
Around him was a long and rayless night,
And heaven itself but opened dimly on his sight.

LXXV.

And does Religion such a terror prove
To those she gathers 'neath her sacred wings?
No ! she 's the herald of celestial love,
And every blessing from her bosom springs :
But 'mid the cloister sought, where darkly flings
Its terrors, superstition, not a tone
Of her soft harmony is heard ; the strings
Of her sweet harp, there broken, breathe a moan
Which from the wrung heart draws despair's unhallowed groan.

LXXVI.

But o'er our heads, as life's swift moments glide,
She, if unfettered,—pointing to the shore
Where, when we've past o'er time's precarious tide,
The storms of sorrow can assail no more,—
Conducts us safely through the angry roar
Of the fierce hurricanes that round us blare,
And guides us where our souls may safely soar
Beyond the strife of elements; and where
“The wicked cease from troubling,” rest the weary there.

LXXVII.

Poor Wallace now, a gloomy devotee,
Blindly pursued where superstition led :
His food was coarse—he tasted sparingly—
Sackcloth his clothing, and the flint his bed.
Soon the scant locks upon his uncombed head
Grew white, and, withering, left the shrunk scalp bare :
On all around he looked with holy dread,
As if pollution's taint was everywhere,
And but the cursed on earth could heaven's pure blessings share.

LXXVIII.

Behold the swallow in the summer sun
Disporting in its bright and fervid ray !
All was resplendence when the morn begun,
But storms and thunders darken o'er the day :
Around the heavens the vivid lightnings play,
Whilst o'er the land the streaming torrents pour ;
At length, a victim to the deathful fray,
No longer 'mid the azure plains he'll soar,
But on the green sward lies, nor hears the tempest's roar.

LXXIX.

On earth has peace no sure abiding-place !
Here may she sometimes dwell, and for awhile
Strew flowers before us in our earthly race ;
But soon—too soon, alas !—her placid smile
Contracts to frowns austere, and o'er the pile
Of blighted hopes she flickers and expires.
How does the present oft our thoughts beguile !
Yet while the soul to future joys aspires,
Woe lights her torch within, and fans the kindling fires.

LXXX.

But is this world our everlasting rest?
“Strangers and pilgrims” only are we here,
“Seeking a better country,” where the blest
Shall hail our coming with a rapturous cheer,
Which, whilst its music charms the immortal ear,
Shall spread its echoes round the radiant skies :
There never shall the trembling voice of fear
Pour its wild wailings. Mortal ! sorrow tries
And proves the heart, but as she proves it, purifies.

END OF CANTO V.

CANTO VI.

In solitude and in despair
He sits, with long, black, rusty hair ;
Face dim as death, and his fixed eye
Red flashing with futurity.
A holy madman ! with no chain
But those forged in his burning brain.

*From Edderline's Dream,
by Professor Wilson.*

CANTO THE SIXTH.

Hearts there have been o'er which this weight of woe
Came by long use of suffering, tame and slow;
But thine, old man, was sudden—over thee
It broke at once, when all seemed ecstasy!
When hope looked up, and saw the gloomy past
Melt into splendour, and bliss dawn at last:—
'Twas then, e'en then, o'er joys so freshly blown,
This mortal blight of misery came down;
E'en then the full warm gushings of thy heart
Were checked, like fount-drops, frozen as they start!
And there, like them, cold sunless relics hang,
Each fixed and chilled into a lasting pang.

Lalla Rookh.

I.

MIDNIGHT had flung her shadows o'er the world,
And Sleep, his fetters on the human soul:
Around the mountain peaks moist vapours curled,
While from the lifeless regions of the pole
Silence assumed her undisturbed control.
The owl on ponderous pinion traced his way,
And to the woods poured forth his dismal dole;
The feathered tribes were mute on every spray,
As 'neath the fireless hearth the night-fly chirped his lay.¹

II.

The mustering winds swept through the troubled air,
And waked at length the startled ear of night ;
The hungry jackal left his bloody lair,
And skulked abroad beneath the stars' pale light,
To glut on carrion flesh his appetite.
By fits the ban-dog bayed the rising moon,
Forth the freebooter prowled, in murderous plight ;
The dire mosquito hummed his drowsy tune,²
And on the sleeping wight bestowed his smarting boon.

III.

Oh ! what a sad and fearful thing to see
The gloom—to mark the stillness of that hour,
When nature wears death's awful livery,
And counterfeits his awe-awakening power !
When darkness steals its fragrance from the flower,
And hides its varied charms from mortal sight,
When superstition quits her goblin tower,
While phantoms dire accompany her flight,
Adding new terrors to the gloomy reign of night.

IV.

Hers are the hours when dread remorse is heard,
And to the conscience thunders its decrees ;
When thought, by passion now no longer stirred,
Retires, and drains from sorrow's bitter lees
Their last wrung drop of gall : then quickly freeze
Those blander feelings which the heart kept warm
Ere wrongs had chilled them ; then the mind's disease
Gains fearful nurture—nor has sleep a charm,
When the vexed soul is stung, to hush its wild alarm.

V.

This is the time when o'er the slumbering soul
Of Nature hangs a cloud ; she seems to mourn
Her light departed : clad in sorrow's stole,
She wears it till the truant day's return.
Like a maid weeping o'er her lover's urn,—
No more the smile of beauty lights her eye,
But on their lids the feverish tear-drops burn ;
So Nature, in her night, appears to lie,
Bereft of all her charms—a type of misery.

VI.

Now is the reign of solitary woe :
The hoary anchorite his vigil keeps ;
The Cænobite endures the nightly throe
Of scourge piacular, before he sleeps.
O'er a lost world the cloistered virgin weeps,
And makes her moan unheard by mortal ear ;
From fen to fen the gleaming meteor leaps,
Drawing the long-belated traveller near,
Who, plunged in the morass, there ends life's sad career.

VII.

'Tis then the plotter ponders o'er his schemes,
Safe from the scrutinizing eye of day ;
'Tis then the miser of his treasure dreams,
And basks awhile in fancy's cheating ray :
Then the bold wanton snares her thoughtless prey,
And leaves him with her curse upon him ; then
All the fell broods of sin begin their play,
And howl their orgies, whilst unholy men
Join the loud revel in her foul and leprous den.

VIII.

Night is the solemn harbinger of ill,
The season dark of infamy and crime :
The deadly thief, the assassin, deadlier still,
Then reap their fruits, for then 's their harvest time.
Vice walks at large when night is at its prime,
And in its slumbers fires the youthful brain,
There playing off her dextrous pantomime :
Guilt strikes the alarum then, and in his train
The whirlwind passions throng to solemnize his reign.

IX.

Beneath her covert, murder—midnight's hag—
Skulks from the moon, and eyes it down the sky ;
Then limps abroad, and from the pointed crag
Thrusts down her victim, and returns the cry
Of laughter as the death-shriek echoes nigh.
Night ! all thy works are black as are thy weeds—
Thine is the hour of ill's supremacy !
By thee are countenanced those ruthless deeds
At which the cheek grows pale, the heart of pity bleeds.

X.

Sad is the theme which has engaged the pen
Of one whose wit, of one whose muse is young :³
To show the end of vice to vicious men,
The lyre, unnoted yet, has now been strung.
Oft have the crimes of stormy minds been sung
In strains of loftiest measure, which to hear,
The thrill of rapture through the heart has rung ;—
But deem not that I vainly would compeer
With bards of high repute,—they far transcend my sphere.

XI.

Beneath a blasted pine alone reclined
On its gnarled roots, a wild and withered man,
Whose wretched plight proclaimed his wreck of mind :
O'er his scarred cheek the streams of sorrow ran,
Checked by mad laughter, or the muttered ban.
As the broad moon chased each careering cloud,
Which o'er her disk its rapid course began,
With gesture fierce he'd rave his griefs aloud,
While to his troubled brain the maddening visions crowd.

XII.

Mocking the horrors of the midnight storm,
His wrinkled temples naked to the blast,
In night's chill dews he 'd drench his wasted form,
And on the flint his wounded body cast.
Oft would the wretched man, unconscious, fast
Till weakened nature could endure no more,
Then take the proffered crust, his sole repast,
And to the winds his dismal wailings pour,
Nor seek, till quite o'erspent, his low and lonely door.

XIII.

But Quiet mocked his seeking ; memory there
Mapped on his mind the past, till the hot tear
Provoked the frantic ravings of despair,
Which fell, with frightful note, on pity's ear.
The casual passenger who wandered near,
O'ercome with wonder at the strange lament,
Quickened his pace, oppressed with sudden fear,
And crossed his blanching forehead as he went,
Lest hell, on mission vile, some horrid imp had sent.

XIV.

Is this the being whose capacious soul
Could scarce be fettered to the fleshly crust
Which curbed its flight to that unearthly goal
Beyond the distant stars? Oh! what a rust
Has cankered o'er it now! and e'en the dust
In which 'tis jailed has felt the deadly blight!
Behold how grief, stern scourger of the just,
Has done destruction's work! Oh! piteous sight!
Crushed is the elastic soul beneath its matchless might.

XV.

'Time was when lustre sparkled in that eye
Which spoke the language of a mighty mind;
When in that bosom the big pulse beat high
With all that virtue felt; where every kind
And bland expression of the heart could find
Instant access;—there lurked no deadly sin;
Religion and the hate of vice combined
To guard the citadel of peace within,
And there was much, in sooth, the love of heaven to win.

XVI.

Alas! how changed, and, like some fretted page
O'er which old Time has swept with spoiling wing,
How marred! There nothing lovely to engage
The eye or heart; a temple mouldering,
By the loud thunder shook, and tottering
Upon its frail foundation, ere it fall.
Poor wanderer! in life's athletic spring,
Ere sorrow in thy cup had wrung its gall,
Thou wert fame's favourite theme—thy praise was prized by all.

XVII.

Thine was the very deadliest draught of woe,
A life of thriftless toil, and care, and pain,
Which did a darkness o'er thy spirit throw.
That mind, once stored with all a mind could gain,
Has burst the bonds of reason, and its rein
Is snapped for ever. Misery's blasting stroke
Has paralyzed the heart, convulsed the brain,
And left thee, like a scathed and branchless oak,
To wither at the root, thy spirit wrenched and broke.

XVIII.

Yonder beneath the night-star's lucid beam
He sits, o'ershadowed by that sapless tree
Which lightning storms have blasted; not a gleam
Of mental sunshine lights the troubled sea
Of fancies wild that mar his memory.
That eye's dilated stare too sadly speaks
A mind o'erthrown in its maturity :
Through the time-fretted channels of his cheeks
Rolls the warm tear-drop, unrestrained and free,
Telling its eloquent tale of secret misery.

XIX.

Dire was the still-remembered cause which wrought
This havoc of the mind, this wreck of sense :
Audacious vice her deadly poison brought,
Drugging joy's sparkling cup, with bold pretence ;
And, grasping at the gem of innocence,
Hurled the bright casket to untimely fate.
Woe meets in this world doubtful recompense,
But in another—hear, ye worldly great—
The Lazarus shall rise when kings endure defeat.

XX.

Here are the chartered rights of virtue spurned,
And man proclaims himself his fellow's foe.
The golden calf is worshipped ; vice is turned
Loose on her prey, whilst, like a timid doe,
Virtue retires to shun the menaced woe.
Those feverish pangs of guilt which probe and thrill
The conscious heart, none but the guilty know ;
There is the secret sanctuary of ill—
On it her vampires prey, and foully gorge their fill.

XXI.

Mammon's our god—we serve him with a zeal
Which, offered to the High and Holy One,
Would save our souls alive, and make us feel
All that the Deity for man has done,
When on the sacred mount the palm he won
O'er death and hell, and crushed the serpent's head.
Would we but strive our little course to run
In that same path on which the Saviour shed
Such glory from the skies—no cause were then for dread.

XXII.

Oh ! what a blessed world might this be still,
If man but did his best to make it so ;
Virtue would neutralize the powers of ill
If her fair fruits were gathered as they grow.
'Tis to our own blind errors that we owe
The greatest of our griefs : had guilt ne'er been,
This were a world of peace, and not of woe ;
We 're forced by no fatality to sin—
Vice lays her gaudy snare, and we rush freely in.

XXIII.

Now mark the wretched, melancholy man
On yonder rivulet's projecting brink,—
While winds, with rude salute, his temples fan,—
Stoop his spare body to the wave to drink.
He rises now—now gravely stops to think,
As with some vast design his fancy teemed ;
Then from the half-formed purpose seems to shrink,
Like a scared child at night from what he dreamed,
When fiction's monsters dire life's vivid pictures seemed.

XXIV.

He draws in silence towards the water's side,
And gazes on its surface, calm and clear,
Whereon the laughing moon, in conscious pride,
Shows her reflected figure, bright and sheer,—
To sober thought, to melancholy dear.
With idiot laugh he plunges in the stream,
To catch the lustrous orb which seems so near ;
The quivering waters interrupt its beam,
When rage dilates his eye—his muttering lips blaspheme.

XXV.

He struggles with the waters, calm and cold,
Nor, till their spray has drenched him, seeks the shore :
Still shines the fair resemblance, broad and bold,
Its brightness interrupted now no more ;
The chaste original, with silvery oar,
Glides, like heaven's goddess, down her native sky,
Nor heeds the wretch, whose wandering feet explore—
Whilst o'er his naked head the storm is high—
Wilds where no human footstep meets the anxious eye.

XXVI.

He listens to the murmuring of the blast,
His gaze the while fixed on the dim, dun air,
As if a voice spoke in it of the past—
As if the sounds of love and joy were there.
A smile is on his lips; the vacant stare
A moment leaves his eye, but soon returns
With fierce increase, the gleamings of despair :
His blighted peace hope's visitation spurns—
Still in his heart and brain the fire of frenzy burns.

XXVII.

The smothered accents of his tongue betray
How blank the wilderness within, where crowd
Wild fantasies, chimeras dire, that play
The mockery with their parent. Now aloud
He raves against the moon, as some swift cloud
O'er its orb dashes; and the bubbling blood
Warm from his tongue, which the jagged teeth have plow'd,
Streams o'er his withered lips a crimson flood,
And stains—oh, piteous sight!—the earth on which he stood.

XXVIII.

Across his path the bat, on leathern wing,
Betwixt the glimpses of the moon appears ;
He gazes at the desultory thing
As in eccentric flight its course it steers.
Now it holds onwards, now obliquely veers
Beyond the casual compass of his eye :
He laughs aloud, in mockery of his tears,
And as his gaze is fixed upon the sky,
His maniac-laugh renews whene'er it passes by.

XXIX.

Before him, towering monarch of the wood,
The loaded mango rears his giant form :⁴
Oft had his trunk and lofty crest withstood
The crashing horrors of a tropic storm.
When the hoarse thunder spread its wild alarm,
And lightnings scattered desolation round—
Whilst raged these fearful ministers of harm,
He, though his verdant honours strewed the ground,
Still braved the desperate strife, but yet no victor found.

XXX.

The hapless subject of my lay drew nigh,
And raised his head to scan the stately tree;
The winds had paused awhile, and not a sigh
Disturbed the moment's fixed tranquillity.
He gazed an instant, then on bended knee
Grasped the rough trunk—with many a tug and strain
Trying his might, but unavailingly,
To cast its ponderous body on the plain;
Then groaned in baffled rage, and gnashed his teeth in vain.

XXXI.

Now pours the maniac his sepulchral voice
In a wild flow of voluntary song.
If taste be absent, feeling guides his choice,
And float the sad notes plaintively along,
Until they die the neighbouring hills among.
The prowling jackal listens to the tone,
Though hunger in his rabid breast be strong,
And stops and pricks his ears, whilst all alone
The unconscious wanderer makes his melancholy moan.

XXXII.

He scares the slumbering sparrow from the spray,
And rouses from its rest the bounding deer;
The forest tribes before his steps give way,
And flee, as if some evil thing were near.
With piercing scream, which falls upon night's ear
Like a shrill death-watch,⁵ he observes their flight,
And his eye glistens as he marks their fear.
With hoot and howl he adds to their affright,
And wakes the sleeping echoes with his wild delight.

XXXIII.

Alas! poor sufferer! a portion thine
Alike the needy and the rich may dread!
Who shall interpret fate's mysterious line?
In doubt's uncertain path we blindly tread,
Till in the "lap of earth" we rest our head.
Let us for those at least reserve a sigh
Who eat from woe's spare hand their daily bread,
Nor, self-secure, all future ills defy,
For dangers often lurk where least we think them nigh.

XXXIV.

Life's May-day may be jocund, and its eve
Of summer close auspicious, while the sun
Of pleasure shines unclouded : few perceive,
When dangers are remote, the risks they run :
All hope the goal of happiness is won,
Till o'er them misery lifts its withering arm ;
Hope and reality are never one—
Experience soon dissolves the dreamy charm,
Which ardent fancies work that least have known alarm.

XXXV.

Observe the strange vicissitudes of time !
Each hour is loaded with its separate share
Of good or ill, of moral or of crime ;
And though the power that governs all may spare
Some few light bosoms from the stings of care,
Small is the lot thus portioned ; wretchedness
Treads in our path, and meets us everywhere :
Want pines in mournful silence, while distress
Proclaims herself twin-born with human happiness.

XXXVI.

Do riches purchase bliss, or fame content?
Mark those vast stores of gold which only gild
The dust in which they're buried! Adamant
The heart that hoards, from which there ne'er distilled
The dews of charity; where never thrilled
One keen emotion of requiting love.
Peace dwells not in the coffer richly filled,
Nor in the breast of fame secures her dove—
She holds no league with man—her empire is above.

XXXVII.

And what are titles, honours, or the gauds
That deck nobility—those toys of state
Which man's vain glory now so much applauds?
What are the proud distinctions of the great,
But burdens of such sore and crushing weight
As bend him to the very dust he spurns!
Oft from the portals of the rich man's gate—
No sanctuary there—contentment turns,
While glowing hot within the torch of discord burns.

XXXVIII.

If wealth increase our pleasures, does it not
Increase our wishes also, and our cares?
And surely that must be the happiest lot
Which has the fewest wants. The hardest tares
Grow in the richest soil, and pleasure bears
Honey and wormwood on the self-same stem.
Go, man of wealth and power, and see how fares
Guilt's soul-stung victim! To dispel thy phlegm,
Hie where woe's sufferers writhe, and learn for once from them.

XXXIX.

Go where the madman woos thee to perpend
The deep intensity of mortal care—
Where not one ray of happiness can blend
With the benighting horrors of despair—
Go, and receive an awful lesson there!
There what a check to tame the swell of pride;
Man's form is here, but heaven's bright image where?
No gleam of sunshine flashes through the void
Of banished intellect—now maddened and destroy'd.

XL.

Eternal God! thy lesson here is writ
In characters we never can mistake :
All would grow wiser, better, learning it,
And all should learn it for their interest's sake.
The judgments of Omnipotence o'ertake
The best, for purposes unknown, yet wise.
How few their thirst at joy's pure fountain slake !
Poor child of dust! earth no true bliss supplies :
Its roots are only here—it blossoms in the skies.

XLI.

Behold once more the subject of my song
Still tiring with his moans the ear of night !
The woodland warblers, as he strolls along,
Flutter before him in reluctant flight.
The reckless troubler heeds not their affright,
But still pursues his solitary way,
And, as fresh objects pass before his sight,
Resumes his sad but desultory lay,
And shakes, with motion wild, his tresses silver gray.

XLII.

“Bertha!” he cries, “my child,—alas! my child,
“Dost thou not know me?—though I’m old and spare,
“Though all men shun my sight, declare me wild,
“Believe them not, for I can laugh at care
“When thou art nigh me,—aye, and will forswear
“All future commerce with that deathly race
“Who made my tranquil cot a tiger’s lair:—
“Come, let me gaze upon that angel face,
“Where oft mine eye had fixed its fondest resting-place.

XLIII.

“My Bertha! ha!—and is not Bertha dead?
“Did I not see her golden tresses trail
“Along the turf on which her Edgar bled?
“Howl, ye malignant demons of the gale,
“Let havoc loose, your blasting breath exhale!
“May heaven and earth in dire concussion meet—
“How would the strife my blighted soul regale!
“Man is my foe accursed!—ye lightnings fleet,
“Wing on his head your bolts—revenge is ever sweet:

XLIV.

“ And I will gulp its poisons till my heart
“ Grow black and morbid with the festering bane ;
“ Restore my girl, ye bloodhounds ; shall we part,
“ Because her injured father is not sane ?⁶
“ The lustre of his mind is on the wane,
“ And Bertha’s sire is now reputed mad.
“ Approach, my child ; expunge the damning stain ;
“ Greet but my sight once more and make me glad,
“ For ah ! the poor old man is solitary, sad.

XLV.

“ Dead—dead ! ”—the voice in smothered whispers died :
He paused and shuddered ; then, with doleful yell,
Dashed to the earth his staff, and deeply sighed.
Hearing at length the distant matin bell,
The sound aroused him, and, as by a spell
Awakened from a trance of horrid thought,
He raised his head and smiled :—ah ! who shall tell
What sad expression from that eye was caught,
When to his mind remembrance some dark image brought.

XLVI.

What an appalling sight, alas ! was there !
His bony arms above his head were flung
In a wild agony ; the scanty hair
He tore from the trenched scalp, and fiercely wrung
His lank and fleshless fingers, as if stung
By the sleek death-worm : ever and anon
He poured the direst curses from his tongue.
But though so frantic when the fit was on,
He soon again grew calm, poor heart-wrung woe-begone !

XLVII.

Morning had fully dawned upon him now,
And from the hills dispersed their mists of gray ;
Wan from the midnight watch, his squalid brow
Disclosed new terrors at the rise of day.
There deep the traces of distraction lay—
Its fires at intervals illumed his eye,
Which glared with vacant and “lack-lustre” ray,
Like the paled sun in a November sky,
Peering through murky clouds, when the fierce storm is high.

XLVIII.

Yet there stands he—how changed from former years !
Like a storm-shattered ship when on the deep,
Her sails and cordage rent, she scarcely steers
Her slow course through the waters. Go and weep,
Ye that in pleasure's soft embraces sleep,
O'er the sad ruin, till around your hearts
The bland emotions of compassion creep !
Behold the wreck of all that mind imparts
To man above the brutes, 'till the warm tear-drop starts !

XLIX.

The matin choristers above his head
Pour out their liquid notes to hail the morn,
But to their harmony his soul is dead :
Care from his heart the social link had torn.
The playful lambkin as it crops the thorn
Stops to observe the melancholy man :
The tuneful lark springs blithely from the corn
And hovers nigh,—still nought in nature can
Light to a gleam of joy those features, wild and wan.

L.

Behold him now upon yon beetling rock
Plucking the ivy from its sides of jet !
He wreathes a leaf in every straggling lock
On his lean brow, and forms a coronet
Of rude, fantastic seeming : still beset
At intervals with dark imaginings—
Past sorrows which he never can forget
To memory rush ;—upon his feet he springs,
And, rage-possessed, resumes his frantic wanderings.

LI.

Towards the bright sun the wretched madman turned,
Its glowing beams upon his temples played :
Within his brain the maddening fever burned,
Nor had the damps of night its fires allayed :—
His flashing eye a dire intent betrayed.
Onward at length he rushed, with vigorous bound,
To the near mountain's brow ; thence, undismayed,
Casting one wild, distracted glance around,
Plunged headlong from the height into the gulf profound.

LII.

Deformed and shrunken by the solar ray,
Deep in a pathless glen the body lies,
To forest beasts, to carrion fowls a prey,
Far from the pious search of kindred eyes :
To the fierce glow exposed of tropic skies,
Unknown to friends or kindred if despair
Had crushed its victim ; with unsure surmise
They seek the hapless maniac everywhere,
Yet disappointment only mocks their anxious care.

LIII.

Nor 'till the bones had whitened in the sun,
Knew they where lay the once-bewildered man.
Now stretched on earth a grinning skeleton—
Oh ! what a sight for living eyes to scan !—
O'er the dried bones foul aconite began
To weave its deadly foliage, and dense weeds
Along the arching ribs their tendrils ran ;
Beneath the skull, the worm, the scorpion breeds,
And on their fattening slime the greedy hemlock feeds.

LIV.

What a sad lesson to the mind is read,
When we behold man's form in its decay !
The vanished features and the eyeless head,
The lipless mouth, whence once the sportive lay
Was breathed to the rapt ear—now what are they—
The well-turned sinewy limbs, the lusty frame ?—
Atoms of earth—a mass of sightless clay !
A thing for the dark charnel !—Oh, how tame
Becomes our pride when we but syllable its name !

LV.

Thrice had the moon her monthly measure filled ;
Thrice wheeled her chariot round the vault of heaven,
Since he, whose ravings pleasure never stilled,
By the wild impulse of distraction driven,
Dismissed, uncalled, the life which God had given.
His friends still deemed him wandering, yet the sigh
Of doubt would rise, lest he should die unshriven.
All sought to meet as wont his piercing eye ;
None met the fearful man, yet none, alas ! knew why.

LVI.

And the stark outline had remained for ever
In secret burial on the trackless wild,
Had not a youth, in puerile endeavour
To climb the mount where rocks, uncouthly piled,
Showed peril to be there,—so wayward child
Provokes the praises of his young compeers,—
Adventured up the steep, by sport beguiled;
When in the dark ravine beneath appears
The bleaching bones of him whose woes have claimed your tears.

LXVII.

Recovered from that open sepulchre,
The sapless relics freight at length the grave.
Mass after mass was heard, with dirge and prayer,
The soul from purgatorial thrall to save.
Over his dust no marble traceries wave :
A simple stone reveals his age and name,
Laid sculptureless within the chapel's nave.
Though no Pythonic fire my breast inflame,
Still have I done my best to give his woes to fame.

LVIII.

'Twas Wallace, that, while hoarse the screech-owl sung,
Poured o'er his crumbling bones the burial prayer.
The sallow monk o'er these sad relics hung,
As if the last of all he loved was there.
The fixed and ashy lip—the lurid stare,
When closed the solemn service for the dead,
The still deep feelings of his heart declare :
There yet the bitter roots of grief were fed,
And o'er the blasted soil their morbid influence shed.

LIX.

That morning the piacular lash ⁷
Was with fresh vigour to his limbs applied ;
The penance-drops from many an opening gash
Rolled, slow and tepid, down his haggard side ;
His tongue gave forth no groan, and yet he sighed
As his charged breast would burst—the penance o'er,
He breathed a low, faint prayer to heaven, and died.
Poor child of woe ! who shall thy fate deplore ?
Thy soul is with its God, where grief can sting no more.

LX.

Here pause the song ! nor let meek pity's eye
Refuse the gentle tribute of a tear !
If e'er misfortune merited a sigh,
The soul of feeling would award it here.
Where is Eumenes now—that man of fear—
And Wallace, whither ?—their unhappy doom
Has forced a strain upon the patient ear.
The muse now quits her theme—and for each tomb
May the narcissus thrive, the rue's meek flowrets bloom !

END OF CANTO VI.

NOTES.

NOTES TO CANTO I.

NOTE I. STANZA I.

*Above its chimney-top the craggy steep
Rose like a column.*

THE following description is from the pen of a very eminent person, who resided some time in the Isle of France, and who has given a very faithful representation of its principal features :—

“ Although this enclosure of rocks appears almost perpendicular behind us, those green flats which subdivide their heights are so many stages, by which you arrive, by means of some intricate paths, at the foot of that inclining and inaccessible cone of rocks, which is called the THUMB. At the bottom of this rock is an esplanade, covered with trees, but so lofty and so steep, that they appear like a large forest in the air, surrounded with fearful precipices. The clouds, which the summit of the THUMB attracts continually around it, incessantly feed several cascades of water, which are precipitated to such a depth into the bottom of the valley, situated at the back of this mountain, that when you are at its top, you no longer hear the noise of their fall. From this place a great part of the island is perceptible, as well as the peaks of several of its mountains; among others those of PITERBOTH, and of the THREE PAPS, and their valleys covered with forests; then

the open sea, and the island of Bourbon, which is forty leagues to the westward."—*St. Pierre*.

NOTE 2. STANZA II.

Here oft the storm terrific fury poured.

It is well known that the hurricanes which sometimes pass over the Isle of France are truly terrific. St. Pierre's descriptions of this island are at once so just and beautiful, that I cannot do better than furnish the reader with an account of one of these desolating storms by that most eloquent writer and exemplary man.

"Huge whirlwinds of dust raised themselves from the highways, and hung suspended in the air. No cloud arose out of the sea; during the day only red vapours ascended above its surface, and appeared at sunset like the flames of a great conflagration. Even the night season diffused no coolness over the burning atmosphere. The bloody disk of the moon rose, of an enormous size, in the hazy horizon; the languid flocks, on the sides of the mountains, with their necks stretched out toward heaven, and drawing in the air with difficulty, made the valleys resound with their mournful cries: even the cafre who conducted them lay along the ground, endeavouring to cool himself in that position. In the meantime, those excessive heats, raised out of the bosom of the ocean an assemblage of vapours, which, like a vast parasol, covered the face of the island. The summits of the mountains collected these around them, and long furrows of flame, from time to time, issued out of their cloud-capt peaks. Presently after, tremendous thunder-claps made the woods, the plains, and the valleys, reverberate the noise of their explosions. The rain in cataracts gushed down from heaven. Foaming torrents precipitated themselves down the sides of the mountain. The bottom of the bason was transformed into a sea; the platform on which the cottages were raised, into an island; and the entrance into the valley had become a sluice, out of which rushed, with awful impetuosity, by the force of the roaring waters, the earth, the trees, and the rocks."—*St. Pierre*.

NOTE 3. STANZA V.

All but a God he seems, in reason's very spite.

There is, perhaps, no object in nature so magnificent as the rising sun, when seen from the summit of a lofty hill, emerging from the vast and quiet ocean. No words can convey to the mind an adequate idea of its grandeur. It must be seen to be truly felt. Rousseau, however, has a very beautiful description :—

“On le voit s’annoncer de loin par les traits de feu qu’il lance au-devant de lui. L’incendie augmente, l’orient paroît tout en flammes ; à leur éclat, on attend l’astre long-tems avant qu’il se montre ; à chaque instant on croit le voir paroître : on le voit enfin. Un point brillant part comme un éclair, et remplit aussitôt tout l’espace : le voile de ténèbres s’efface et tombe : l’homme reconnoît son séjour, et le trouve embelli. La verdure a pris, durant la nuit, une vigueur nouvelle ; le jour naissant qui l’éclaire, les premiers rayons qui la dorent, la montrent couverte d’un brillant réseau de rosée, qui réfléchit à l’œil la lumière et les couleurs. Les oiseaux, en chœur, se réunissent et saluent de concert le père de la vie : en ce moment pas un seul ne se tait. Leur gazouillement, foible encore, est plus lent et plus doux que dans le reste de la journée ; il se sent de la langueur d’un paisible réveil. Le concours de tous ces objets porte aux sens une impression de fraîcheur qui semble pénétrer jusqu’à l’âme. Il y a là une demi-heure d’enchantement, auquel nul homme ne résiste ; un spectacle si grand, si beau, si délicieux, n’en laisse aucun de sang-froid.”—*J. J. Rousseau, Emile*, liv. iii.

NOTE 4. STANZA VII.

*The ocean compassed with its watery zone
Mauritius' rocky shore ; above the sea
Hills, as by some long-past convulsion thrown
From the smooth plain, frowned sternly o'er the lea.*

This island was first discovered by the Dutch in 1598, who gave it the name of Mauritius, in honour of the Prince of Orange. Its ebony,

in which it abounds, is the most solid, close, and capable of the highest polish of any in the world.

“ Tout sert à prouver que l’Isle de France a été autrefois sujette à quelques volcans ; la grande quantité de pierres et de roches calcinées, éparsées de côte et d’autre, le prouvent.”

Voyage à l’Isle de France, &c. par P. Brunet, de Nantes.

NOTE 5. STANZA X.

*Seldom the squalid harpies of disease
Came on destruction’s mission.*

“ La température de l’Isle de France est une des plus agréables que je connaisse, et le climat que je choisirais de préférence, si les habitans étaient ce qu’ils devraient être sous un ciel si pur. La saison s’y partage en deux parties seulement—l’hiver, qui n’est que le temps des pluies, et l’été. Les coups de vent et les ouragans y sont assez fréquens.”—*Voyage à l’Isle de France.*

The climate of the Isle of France is considered remarkably healthy. St. Pierre, and all who have written upon this subject, that I am acquainted with, have given it this character. Persons whose constitutions have been impaired by the noxious heats of India, repair thither to recruit their strength, which they seldom fail to recover after a few months’ residence.

NOTE 6. STANZA XVIII.

*But in retirement, where the constant strife
Of fierce opinion never swells the breeze,
Smooth and unvaried is the track of life.*

I cannot forbear giving here a passage from Sir W. Temple, as it exhibits a beautiful picture of rural felicity. Although the writer’s object was to describe the pleasures of a garden, still it presents us with the very beau-ideal of retired life.

“ No other sort of abode (says he) seems to contribute so much both to tranquillity of mind and indolence of body. The sweetness of the air, the pleasantness of the smell, the verdure of the plants, the cleanliness and lightness of food, the exercise of working or walking ; but, above all, the exemption from care and solicitude, seem equally to favour and improve both contemplation and health, the enjoyment of sense and imagination, and thereby the quiet and ease both of mind and body. A garden has been the inclination of kings, and the choice of philosophers ; the common favourite of public and private men ; the pleasure of the greatest, and the care of the meanest ; an employment and a possession, for which no man is too high nor too low. If we believe the Scriptures, we must allow that God Almighty esteemed the life of man in a garden, the happiest he could give him ; else he would not have placed Adam in that of Eden.”—*Garden of Epicurus*.

“ With a virtuous and cheerful family, with a few faithful and good-humoured friends, with a well-chosen collection of elegant books, and with a competency, one may enjoy comforts even in the deserted village, which the city, with all its diversions, cannot supply.”

Knox's Essays.

NOTE 7. STANZA XXI.

*But such unearthly feelings are unknown
To those, &c.*

“ The variegated verdure of the fields and woods, the succession of grateful odours, the voice of pleasure pouring out its notes on every side with the gladness apparently conceived by every animal from the growth of his food and the clemency of the weather, throw over the whole earth an air of gaiety significantly expressed by the smile of nature. Yet there are men to whom these scenes are able to give no delight, and who hurry away from all the varieties of rural beauty, to lose their hours and divert their thoughts by cards or assemblies, a tavern dinner, or the prattle of the day.”—*Dr. Johnson*.

NOTE 8. STANZA XXXIX.

Beneath her gentle tread the heather bent, &c.

“ The commencement of their march in the desert was over a region covered with myrrh-bearing shrubs, and the plant whence spikenard was extracted; the Phœnician merchants, who accompanied the army, recognized those aromatics, and loaded beasts of burthen with them. The trampling of the long columns crushed the fragrant stems, and diffused a grateful perfume through the still atmosphere.”

Life of Alexander the Great, by the Rev. J. Williams.

NOTES TO CANTO II.

NOTE 1. STANZA I.

Where oft refinement does but varnish crime.

IT is the practice with parents at the Mauritius to send their children to the French capital for their education; and the creoles of this island are rather ambitious of literary distinction—a very laudable ambition too.

“ It is certainly something very noble to make one’s voice heard through all the din of a thousand years; to be the creator of expressions with which, when we shall have been long mingled with the elements, unborn generations shall be thrilled with pleasure, or made wiser, or better, or more content with their lot: to transmute our fleeting thoughts into imperishable signs, which may be made as numerous as the sands on the sea-shore, and as lasting as the world; and by means of these, to make ourselves the companions of man’s fortune for ever, and hold sway over his resolutions, and temper his passions, and influence his happiness like a household God, ever ready to be consulted on his domestic hearth, and ever advising that which, followed, must render him our grateful debtor! To become one of the oracles; to transmute ourselves from frail, changeful, transitory beings, subject, like the most ignorant, to sorrow and sickness, into

impassive, unchangeable, eternal somethings, is surely reward sufficient for a few years of abstinence, and watching, and toil, and endurance, and study."—*Essays, by J. A. St. John.*

NOTE 2. STANZA III.

We live but for instruction.

" I consider a human soul without education like marble in a quarry, which shows none of its inherent beauties, until the skill of the polisher fetches out the colours, makes the surface shine, and discovers every ornamental cloud, spot and vein that runs through the body of it. Education, after the same manner, when it works upon a noble mind, draws out to view every latent virtue and perfection, which, without such helps, are never able to make their appearance."—*Spectator.*

NOTE 3. STANZA III.

— *the noblest ties*

*That link this passing world's communities
In fellowship, to knowledge all are due.*

It is only by this acquisition that we are to be distinguished from the savage of the polar regions or the African desert. It is to religious knowledge especially that we are indebted for all that this world furnishes of true enjoyment. The most refined is intellectual enjoyment, because the most pure; and the more religious knowledge we acquire, the more spiritualized become our habits of mind and reflections; and it will invariably be found that our pleasures in this world improve or decline precisely in proportion as they are pure or otherwise.

" The fire of a glowing imagination, the property of youth, may make folly look pleasing and lend a beauty to objects which have none inherent in them; just as the sunbeams may paint a cloud and diversify it with beautiful stains of light, however dark, unsubstantial,

and empty in itself: but nothing can shine with undiminished lustre but religion and knowledge, which are essentially and intrinsically bright. Take it therefore for granted, which you will find by experience, that nothing can be long entertaining, but what is in some measure beneficial; because nothing else will bear a calm and sedate review."—*Seed*.

NOTE 4. STANZA XXXIII.

Breathes there a man, of mind so dense and dead, &c.

“Breathes there a man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said
This is my own, my native land!
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd
As home his footsteps he hath turn'd
From wandering on a foreign strand!
If such there breathe, go mark him well;
For him no minstrel raptures swell;
High tho' his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim,—
Despite those titles, power and pelf,
The wretch, concentr'd all in self,
Living, shall forfeit his renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust from whence he sprung
Unwept, unhonour'd and unsung.”

Lay of the Last Minstrel.

NOTE 5. STANZA XLIII.

*How oft by her plucked out, when, firm and deep
Within man's breast infix'd with deadly smart!*

There can be no doubt that we owe to virtuous women the harmony and good order which reign in civilized communities; they

have everywhere a vast influence upon the economy of civil and social life. Even where men are not deterred from vice by sentiments of religion, they are frequently allured into virtue by feeling ashamed to appear before the pure and lovely objects of their affections with the stains of moral pollution upon them. That sentiment of respect which keeps them from vice must necessarily lead them to virtue, because, to abstain from evil is to do good, and this is the bulwark of mortal happiness.

NOTE 6. STANZA LII.

*This love, and this alone, can cure the blight
Of sorrow, and restore the bosom's lost delight.*

“Innocent and virtuous love casts a beauteous hue over human nature. It quickens and strengthens our admiration of virtue, and our detestation of vice; it opens our eyes to our imperfections, and gives us a pride in excelling; it inspires us with heroic sentiments, generosity, and a contempt of life, a boldness for enterprise, chastity, and purity of sentiment. It takes a similitude to devotion, and almost deifies the object of passion. People whose breasts are dulled with vice, or stupified by nature, call this passion romantic love; but, when it was the mode, it was the diagnostic of a virtuous age. These symptoms of heroism spring from an obscure principle, that in a noble mind unites itself with every passionate view in life; this nameless principle is distinguished by endowing people with extraordinary powers and enthusiasm in the pursuit of their favourite wishes, and by disgust and disappointment when we arrive at the point where our wishes seem to be completed. It has made great conquerors despise dangers and death in their way to victory, and sigh afterwards when they had no more to conquer.”—*Usher*.

NOTES TO CANTO III.

NOTE 1. STANZA III.

*Oh ! what were man, if friendship never threw
Her halo round his destiny's pale star ?*

“ Good God ! is there a man upon the face of the earth who would deliberately accept of all the wealth and all the affluence this world can bestow, if offered to him upon the severe terms of his being unconnected with a single mortal whom he could love, or by whom he should be beloved ? This would be to lead the wretched life of a detested tyrant, who, amidst perpetual suspicions and alarms, passes his miserable days a stranger to every tender sentiment, and utterly precluded from the heart-felt satisfactions of friendship.”

Melmoth's translation of Cicero's Lælius.

NOTE 2. STANZA V.

*But severed once, disunion mars the whole—
Released affection flies, and mocks the will's control.*

The sentiments expressed in these lines, and, in short, running through the whole of the stanza, may appear harsh to many ; I

can only say, however, that experience but too often proves them to be just. It was my business here to represent things as they are, not as they ought to be.

NOTE 3. STANZA IX.

When spots or canker shall have gathered there.

We need not go so far back as to the illustrious Roman dictator* for examples of a contempt of wealth even among renowned personages. Wallace indeed only followed in this respect the example of greater men.

“ Mahmood, in the joy of his heart, desired the opinion of Subooktügen concerning the house and garden, which were much admired on account of the taste displayed in their formation. The king, to the great disappointment of his son, told him that he viewed the whole as a bauble, which any of his subjects might raise by means of wealth; observing, that it was the business of a prince to raise more durable fabrics to fame, which might stand for ever, as objects worthy of imitation, but difficult to be surpassed by posterity. The poet Nizamy Oorazy, of Samarkand, makes upon this saying the following reflection: ‘ Notwithstanding the numerous palaces built by Mahmood, who vaunted of their beauty and magnificence, yet we see not one stone in its proper place, though the poems of Oonsurry † still remain a splendid monument of his talents.’ ”

*History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India,
translated from the Persian by John Briggs, Lieut.-
Colonel of the Madras Army.*

* Cincinnatus.

† Oonsurry, a celebrated poet, who resided at the court of Mahmood.

NOTE 4. STANZA XV.

Who lived ungalled by crushing tyrannies.

St. Pierre has given a very terrible account of the conduct of the Isle of France planters towards their slaves, for which, I believe, he was banished from the island. I perceive also that Mr. Pringle, the author of a volume of very beautiful poems, written chiefly during a residence in southern Africa, describes in his notes the treatment of slaves generally at the Isle of France to be extremely barbarous. For my own part I can only say, that, during a residence of six months on this island, in the family of an opulent planter, I was particularly struck with his uniform kindness towards those unfortunate creatures who had become his property by right of purchase; and so attached were they to him and his family, that when it was proposed to draft a certain number of slaves from the estates of the different planters, to be formed into a regiment, which would have secured to them their liberty, all his came to him in a body and requested that they might not be sent away from so kind a master.

NOTE 5. STANZA XX.

His passion's fire was quenched—his very soul grew tame.

I believe this is frequently the case where the passion is pure and the heart uncorrupted; in fact, it is an indication of a love blended with respect for the object beloved and an apprehension of undesert on the part of the object loving, which is at once the highest test of its purity.

NOTE 6. STANZA XXXI.

*Edgar perceived the struggles of his mind
'Twixt love and friendship.*

“L'amitié! passion sublime, sentiment des grandes âmes, bonheur du monde, devant lequel tous les maux disparaissent l'on s'affoiblis-

sent, et tous les biens s'embellissent et s'accroissent. O divine amitié ! ton nom seul me rappelle tous les charmes de ma vie. Passion héroïque, dont le feu, toujours pur, est allumé par le sentiment, et animé par l'intelligence ! Vertu consolatrice, que le souverain Etre a accordée à l'homme pour le dédommager des suites funestes d'une raison égarée ! Sentiment bienfaisant, sans lequel il ne peut exister aucun bien pour nous ! car, qu'est-ce qu'un bien dont on ne peut parler à son ami ? Vertu céleste, dont le nom a été si souvent prostitué, dont l'image a été si souvent altérée, que les mortels adorent, même lorsqu'ils l'ignorent ! Passion généreuse et sublime, qui ennoblit tout notre être, et qui ne nous fait vivre que pour l'ami que notre cœur a choisi !"

Lacépède.

NOTE 7. STANZA XLV.

*For what can minister to a mind's disease
When all the buddings of the heart are sere.*

"Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd,—
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,—
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And, with some sweet oblivious antidote,
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?"

Macbeth, Act 5, Scene 3.

NOTE 8. STANZA XLVI.

But time alone can heal the bosom's smart.

"The disturbers of our happiness in this world are our desires, our griefs, and our fears; and to all these, the consideration of mortality is a certain and adequate remedy. 'Think,' says Epictetus, 'frequently on poverty, banishment, and death; and thou wilt then never indulge violent desires or give up thy heart to mean sentiments'—οὐδὲν οὐδέποτε ταπεινὸν ἐνθυμήσῃ, οὔτε ἄγαν ἐπιθυμήσεις τινός."

Rambler.

The many broken hearts, attributable alone to grief, fully disprove the assumption of the moralist.

NOTE 9. STANZA LII.

—when the horn
Was echoed from the mountains.

It was formerly the custom at the Isle of France to summon the slaves to their morning labours by the sound of a horn.

NOTE 10. STANZA LV.

When on the harassed soul despair's harsh feelings seize.

“There are, unquestionably, states of mind, during the prevalence of affliction, or any strong passion, in which there is no point in the jest, as there is no pleasure in the very aspect of joy.”

Brown's Philosophy of the Human Mind.

NOTES TO CANTO IV.

NOTE 1. STANZA I.

— *guilt his deity.*

“ Huic ab adolescentiâ bella intestina, cædes, rapinæ, discordia civilis, grata fuêre; ibique juventutem suam exercuit: corpus patiens inediae, alioris, vigiliæ, supra quam cuiquam credibile est: animus audax, subdolanus, varius, cuiuslibet rei simulator ac dissimulator: alieni appetens, sui profusus; ardens in cupiditatibus: satis eloquentiæ, sapientiæ parum: vastus animus, immoderata, incredibilia, nimis alta semper cupiebat.”—*Sallust.*

NOTE 2. STANZA IV.

There was a lurking devil in his eye.

“ There was a laughing devil in his sneer
That raised emotions both of rage and fear;
And where his frown of hatred darkly fell,
Hope withering fled—and mercy sigh'd farewell.”

Corsair.

NOTE 4. STANZA XIII.

*There is in joy a frequent gush of pain,
For sorrow issues from the selfsame spring.*

There is a certain reaction produced by our most refined joys, which I dare say will be understood by some who may read these lines, and by many, if they should obtain *many* readers. It is, in fact, that reaction, inseparable both from pain and pleasure, which is, as it were, a secondary cause of these very feelings; for the cessation of pain affords access to pleasure, and the cessation of pleasure, to pain. The more refined our enjoyment, the greater our fear lest we should be deprived of it; and the more severe our suffering, the greater our hope that it will speedily terminate.

NOTE 5. STANZA XVI.

*It tames the savage breasts of savage men,
And melts the harsher feelings to delight.*

“ Nought under heaven so strongly doth allure
The sense of man and all his mind possess
As beauty's love-bait, that doth procure
Great warriors of their rigour to repress,
And mighty hands forget their manliness
Drawn with the power of an heart-robbing eye,
And wrapt in fetters of a golden tress
That can, with melting pleasance, mollify
Their harden'd hearts, enur'd to blood and cruelty.”
Fairy Queen.

NOTE 6. STANZA XXX.

While from his full, quick eye, the tears began to start.

This is very commonly an indication of the most ferocious passion; and where tears in a man, unused to weep, accompany the expressions

of his rage, it will be frequently found to be a symptom of sanguinary feeling in its most savage excess.

NOTE 7. STANZA XLIV.

*Thus oft the little glory of the wood
Before the cobra stands.*

The common grey squirrel of India, a very beautiful little animal, is not unfrequently destroyed by the Cobra di Capello snake, and its screams, when within the 'coil of the monster, are of the most piteous description. So little is generally known of the snake above mentioned, that a description of it from the pen of an eminent natural historian and philosopher cannot be out of place here.

"The Cobra di Capello, or hooded serpent, inflicts the most deadly and incurable wounds. Of this formidable creature, there are five or six different kinds; but they are all equally dangerous, and their bite is followed by speedy and certain death. It is from three to eight feet long, with two large fangs hanging out of the upper jaw. It has a broad neck, and a mark of dark brown on the forehead; which, when viewed frontwise, looks like a pair of spectacles; but behind, like the head of a cat. The eyes are fierce and full of fire; the head is small, and the nose flat, though covered with very large scales, of a yellowish ash colour; the skin is white, and the large tumour on the neck is flat, and covered with oblong, smooth scales."

Buffon's Natural History.

NOTE 8. STANZA XLVI.

*None know the tortures of a guilty soul,
But they whom guilt has branded as her own.*

"The history of mankind has ever been a continued tragedy; the world a great theatre, exhibiting the same repeated scene of the follies of men shooting forth into guilt, and of their passions fermenting by a quick process into misery."—*Blair.*

NOTE 9. STANZA LXI.

*For bad and good, throughout the varied year,
Spring's perfumes breathe—the rains of autumn fall.*

“For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

St. Matthew, v. 45.

There is a striking coincidence with this passage in the writings of a celebrated heathen—“*Etiam sceleratis sol lucet.*”—*Seneca.*

NOTES TO CANTO V.

NOTE 1. STANZA I.

Revenge was burning still.

It is truly horrible to think to what extent this ferocious passion is sometimes carried. The 611th number of the Spectator concludes with the confession of a Spanish nun, which gives us a terrific picture of revenge :

“ Know then that I am a nun of a noble family. A base, perjured man undid me, and boasted of it. I soon had him dispatched ; but, not content with the murder, I have bribed the sexton to let me enter his grave, and have now plucked out his false heart from his body ; and thus I use a traitor’s heart. At these words she tore it in pieces and trampled it under her feet.”

Her provocation was indeed extreme, but her sanguinary revenge was horrible.

NOTE 2. STANZA XIII.

And each with weapon of destruction armed.

The laws of custom are sometimes so arbitrary, that even where they are religiously criminal, we shall frequently find men, in other

respects virtuous, who have not the moral courage to encounter the reproaches which a violation of them might occasion from the libertine and profane. Duelling is certainly upheld as a necessary evil by many good men. It is, however, altogether a mistaken principle which prompts them to support this direct violation of a divine prohibition. Where the laws of God are decisive, it is certain that no laws of man can annul them. The duellist is everywhere, and under every circumstance, a murderer, either in fact or intention; for even, though he do not intend to kill, he nevertheless unnecessarily exposes his own life to destruction, and he has no more right over his own life than over that of another.

“ But still it may be urged that honour is, with regard to others, the reputation arising from the fame of virtue; and vindicating an injury done to us, is an indication of courage, and, consequently, is attended with a fame of virtue. I answer, that when courage is a virtue, it is always employed in the discharge of some duty, the neglect of which would be a vice. For courage is not in itself a virtue; it is so only when it is employed in a good cause; otherwise it is heat and rashness. For, as it is not the punishment which makes the martyr, so it is not fighting that makes the hero: it is the cause that constitutes both. Nay, even fighting in a good cause is not virtue, unless it be also in discharge of duty. And therefore it was that Manlius, the Roman Consul, executed his own son for fighting with Geminus, the General of the Latins, contrary to his orders, although he came off with conquest; as you may read in the eighth book of Livy. Here the cause was good. He fought with the enemy of his country. The event also was glorious. He slew and spoiled the hostile general, which was the height of all glory in arms. But yet, all this being against duty, instead of being honourable, became infamous; and he died, like the meanest slave, by the hands of the common executioner.”—*Delany*.

NOTE 3. STANZA XXII.

*Like those fair fruits upon the deadly shore
Of that dark sea, where Jordan rolls his tides.*

The lake Asphaltites, or the Dead Sea, is said to contain neither animal nor vegetable life—

“Upon whose surface morn and summer shed
Their smiles in vain, for all beneath is dead.”

I need scarcely state here what travellers have reported, that fruits grow upon the shores of this lake, presenting all that is inviting and lovely to the eye, yet when plucked are found to contain nothing but ashes. On the west side of the Dead Sea is a kind of promontory, where, it is pretended, the remains of Lot's wife are still to be seen.

NOTE 4. STANZA XXXI.

*The stubborn cord of grief was strained too high—
It snapped, and Bertha bowed her head and died.*

It is no new event that is here described. The sudden irruptions of grief in persons of extreme sensibility, are often too powerful to be dissipated or controlled, and have led not uncommonly to the saddest consequences.

NOTE 5. STANZA XXXII.

*When dreams, like phantoms of infernal power,
Usurp his waking thoughts.*

“Assemble all the evils which poverty, disease and violence can inflict, and their stings will be found, by far, less pungent than those which guilty passions dart into the heart. Amidst the ordinary calamities of the world, the mind can exert its powers, and suggest relief;

and the mind is properly the man; the sufferer and his sufferings can be distinguished. But those disorders of passion, by seizing directly on the mind, attack human nature in its stronghold and cut off its last resource. They penetrate to the very seat of sensation, and convert all the powers of thought into instruments of torture."

Blair.

NOTE 6. STANZA L.

He that loves truly once must love for ever.

"However, when I reflect upon this woman, I do not know whether, in the main, I am the worse for having loved her: whenever she is recalled to my imagination my youth returns, and I feel a forgotten warmth in my veins. This affliction in my life has streaked all my conduct with a softness, of which I should otherwise have been incapable. It is, perhaps, owing to this dear image in my heart, that I am apt to relent, that I easily forgive, and that many desirable things are grown into my temper which I should not have arrived at by better motives than the thought of being one day hers. I am pretty well satisfied that such a passion as I have had is never well cured."

Steele.

Such is the opinion of this fine writer, of the influence of virtuous love, even though unrequited; and it will confirm the sentiment which it is quoted to illustrate.

NOTE 7. STANZA LIV.

Death! what a harsh arbitrament is thine!

"But needless monuments to wake the thought;
Life's gayest scenes speak man's mortality,
Tho' in a style more florid, full as plain
As mausoleums, pyramids, and tombs.
What are our noblest ornaments, but death's,

Turn'd flatterers of life, in paint and marble ;
 The well-stained canvas or the featur'd stone ?
 Our fathers grace, or rather haunt, the scene ;
 Joy peoples her pavilion from the dead."

Young's Night Thoughts.

NOTE 8. STANZA LXV.

Death stopped his further speech, and the foul spirit freed.

Philosophers of all ages have given such exalted pictures of man, that we almost wonder how it is we sometimes find him such a depraved and detestable being. In the text, I have drawn a character which certainly does any thing but dignify human nature. Such characters nevertheless do exist among us. Man in the abstract, however, it will be confessed, is a creature for our admiration, and sufficiently justifies the eulogy of the poet.*

" Tout marque dans l'homme, même à l'extérieur, sa supériorité sur tous les êtres vivants : il se soutient droit et élevé ; son attitude est celle du commandement ; sa tête regarde le ciel, et présente une face auguste sur laquelle est imprimé le caractère de sa dignité ; l'image de l'âme y est peinte par la physiognomie ; l'excellence de sa nature perce à travers les organes matériels, et anime d'un feu divin les traits de son visage ; son port majestueux, sa démarche ferme et hardie, annoncent sa noblesse et son rang ; il ne touche à la terre que par ses extrémités les plus éloignées, et il ne la voit que de loin, et semble la dédaigner ; les bras ne lui sont pas donnés pour servir de piliers d'appui à la masse de son corps ; sa main ne doit pas fouler la terre

* " What a piece of work is man ! how noble in reason ! how infinite in faculties ! in form and moving, how express and admirable ! in action, how like an angel ! in apprehension, how like a God ! the beauty of the world ! the paragon of animals."—*Hamlet*.

et perdre par des frottements réitérés la finesse du toucher dont elle est le principal organe ; le bras et la main sont faits pour servir à des usages plus nobles, pour exécuter les ordres de la volonté, pour saisir les choses éloignées, pour écarter les obstacles, pour prévenir les rencontres et le choc de ce qui pourrait nuire, pour embrasser et retenir ce qui peut plaire, pour le mettre à portée des autres sens.”

Buffon—Histoire Naturelle.

NOTES TO CANTO VI.

NOTE I. STANZA I.

— the night-fly chirped his lay.

The cricket is found, I believe, in all warm and temperate climates. It is too well known to require a description.

NOTE 2. STANZA II.

The dire mosquito hummed his drowsy tune.

The presence of the mosquito may be known, even where it is not seen, by a humming noise, which it always makes whilst in a state of action.

NOTE 3. STANZA X.

*Sad is the theme which has engaged the pen
Of one whose wit, of one whose muse is young.*

The present poem was written several years ago, when the author was a very young man. It is necessary to state this, as the lapse of ten years quite removes the application of these lines. This circumstance

is not therefore mentioned here in order to disarm criticism by a plea of youth, but merely to clear up what, to those who know the author, might appear an incongruity. Although the poem has been so long written, I have done all that my maturer judgment dictated to render it, as far as I could do so, fit for the public eye. I do not for a moment pretend that I could do better now.

[As some observations have been made upon this note, I am anxious to state definitively that, in introducing it, I was guided solely by the desire of obviating any inference which might possibly arise from the text, that I wished to propitiate criticism by a plea of youth. I really had no such intention. It is my firm opinion that no one should publish what is only *relatively* good, if he thinks he can produce anything *positively* better. A book may have some merit as a juvenile performance, which would be absolutely contemptible as the production of a matured mind. The public have little sympathy with mere *promising* talent: all they require is a good thing, and care not a straw whether the author be young or old. Now, in saying this, I do not mean to insinuate that the "Island Bride" is a good thing, though several of the reviews and public journals have given very flattering testimonials of their favourable opinion. I wish it, however, to be considered on its own merits alone, whatever they may be, without any reference to the circumstances in which it was written. The tenth stanza of the sixth canto would have been omitted, but this could not conveniently be done, as it forms a connecting link between the reflective passages at the opening of the canto and the descriptive portion which commences immediately after the stanza to which this note refers.]

NOTE I. STANZA XXIX.

The loaded mango rears his giant form.

The mango may be reckoned among the most valuable fruits of the favoured east. In flavour it is inferior only to the delicious mangustine, and its wholesomeness, as an article of food, is attested by the

Hindoos, who ascribe to it many medical virtues, and suppose it capable of curing the most inveterate diseases. Europeans acknowledge its effects as a powerful antiscorbutic. The mango-tree, or *mango mangifera* of Linnæus, runs usually to the height of thirty or forty feet, but sometimes considerably higher, with a tufted head; it is quick of growth and remarkably prolific. The wood is consecrated to funerals; burned on piles, and made into coffins for the rich; yet the Brahmins deck their houses with the leaves on particular festivals. The mango was introduced into Jamaica in 1782, when a French ship was captured which was conveying a number of plants from the Isle of France to San Domingo. The fruit is eaten steeped in wine, pickled or preserved; its varieties are innumerable.

NOTE 5. STANZA XXXII.

Like a shrill death-watch.

It will be perceived that I have used the word death-watch in this place, to signify any superstitious prognostic of death, which the insect bearing this name is supposed to be.—A short account of this little creature may not be out of place here.

“It is a small greyish insect, and is very common in all parts of the house in the summer months. It is very nimble in running to shelter, and shy of beating when disturbed, but will beat very freely before you, if you view it without giving it disturbance, or shaking the place where it lies. The author cannot say whether they beat in any other thing, but he never heard their noise except in or near paper. As to their noise, he is in doubt whether it be made by their heads, or rather snouts, against the paper, or whether it be not made after some such manner as grasshoppers and crickets make their noise. He inclines to the former opinion. The reason of his doubt is, that he observed the animal’s body to shake and give a jerk at every beat, but could scarce perceive any part of its body to touch the paper. But its body is so small and near the paper, and its motion in ticking so quick, that he thinks it might be, yet he did not perceive it. Whether this

insect changes its shape and becomes another animal or not, he cannot say ; though he has some cause to suspect that it becomes a sort of fly."—See a very interesting account of the death-watch, by Mr. Allen, in the *Philosophical Transactions*.

NOTE 6. STANZA XLIV.

Because her injured father is not sane.

There may be often observed considerable coherency even in the ravings of maniacs, when any particular emotion is excited connected with the subject of their malady. A remarkable instance is upon record of a sudden suspension of madness in a patient of the Bicêtre asylum in France.

"On the commencement of the French revolution, when the mob broke open the doors of the prisons and lunatic hospitals, to liberate all whom they thought unjustly confined and under restraint, a patient labouring under *empathema inane*, in the Bicêtre asylum, pleaded his own cause so rationally and pathetically, and so artfully accused the governor of the asylum of cruelty, that the armed rabble commanded him to be instantly liberated, and scarcely suffered the governor to escape with impunity. The patient thus restored to freedom was led about in triumph amidst the reiterated shouts of 'Vive la République !' The sight of so many armed men, their loud and confused noise and tumultuous conduct, soon roused their visionary hero to a fresh paroxysm of fury. He seized, with a vigorous grasp, the sabre of his next neighbour, brandished it about with great violence, and wounded his liberators indiscriminately. Fortunately he was soon mastered ; when the savage mob thought proper to lead him back to his cell, and with shame and reluctance acknowledged their own ignorance and misconduct."—*Study of Medicine, by Dr. Mason Good*.

A very extraordinary instance of temporary sanity in a lunatic has been lately noticed in the public journals. It appears, that during the sitting of the commission appointed to inquire into the state of his mind, he was brought into court in a strait-waistcoat, yet he examined

the witnesses himself with great intelligence and acuteness, exhibiting no symptoms of aberration of intellect. From the evidence, however, he was pronounced lunatic, *without lucid intervals*.

NOTE 7. STANZA LIX.

That morning the piaculary lash.

All the French inhabitants of the Isle of France are Catholics. This will sufficiently explain why all the characters in the poem are represented as of that church. I should perhaps have said that the Roman Catholic is the *nominal* religion of this island; for, in truth, very little religion is to be found among the Creoles, and much less among the half-castes. In fact, the licentiousness of the French capital is most diligently copied here. A few of the women, indeed, are very strict in observing the forms of the Roman ritual; and where this is the case, they are almost uniformly found to be extremely bigoted. I am not aware that there is any convent on the island, so that I have only imagined one to exist, for which I have no direct authority. But in a Roman Catholic country, it is not unnatural to infer that there would be such a thing as a priory at least.

I trust it will not be imputed to me, that I have, in the concluding stanzas of the fifth canto, endeavoured to excite any prejudice against a creed which differs from the one that I myself profess. There is undoubtedly fanaticism to be found among the professors of all creeds; and it must be confessed, that Protestant Christians are by no means exempt from this melancholy imputation; but surely in the convent, where everything is calculated to nourish a gloomy enthusiasm, it is much more likely to prevail, than where it is surrounded by no such powerful provocatives.

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